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ROMAN CAMEOS

AND

FLORENTINE MOSAICS.

A Series of Studies:

HISTORICAL, CRITICAL, AND ARTISTIC.

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BY

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"Were I to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me during life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. ... Give a man this taste and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man, unless indeed you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history, with the wisest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters that have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages!"—From Sir Jno. Herschel's address on the opening of the Eton Library.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

It is to travellers and intending travellers that the Editor offers a portable edition of these interesting sketches, so admirably suited to this age of small leisure and wide culture; to those travellers especially who would fain make their holiday a time of healthy development of body, soul and spirit, instead of mere pastime, but who have neither sufficient time nor knowledge of foreign tongues to enable them to forage for themselves in the wide fields of historical investigation, here brought under contribution for them with such easy mastery and fine discernment.

The satirical couplet has by no means lost its sting, which points out how

> The fool who has been sent to Rome,
> Excels the fool who has been kept at home,

or at least gives more evident signs of folly; a folly, however, that often consists only in unpreparedness.

Many a traveller sees nothing, even with the outward eye, merely from not knowing where to look, or what to look for—seeing, for instance, mere rugged rocks or dusty highway, where the geologist at his side discerns traces of bygone ages that make the bare rock to blossom for him with the flowers of science. In the same way, every turn in the road—each ruined tower or forest felled—has a message for the student of History, giving him, in spite of "Time's effacing fingers," traces of the lives and actions of bygone generations that tell their tale of national character or foreign occupation.

It is hoped that these studies will enable busy people to view the contents of foreign galleries and museums with some idea of their place in history, and thus save them from the demon of

weariness that lurks in art-collections ready to devour those who, knowing nothing of the moral life of the period they illustrate, are at a loss to account for the interest others evince in objects so meaningless to themselves, though full of instruction for those able to assign them their proper place in the development of art.

May such be spared the not unnatural vexation, experienced by candid observers who find themselves incapable of admiring some artistic object they suppose worthy of admiration, the importance of which, however, is in reality not so much æsthetic as evolutionary and historic; and may those who have plenty of time before them be stimulated by these suggestive pages to become more closely acquainted with the periods here made to live before them, so as to gather clearer sense of the continuity of history, and at least not be open to the charge of *living and acting as if there had never been a Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WE offer to the public in this volume a series of critical essays on Italy, to be shortly followed by a complete History of the Italian Renaissance. For the last fifteen years we have been studying, at intervals, the Italy of the Past, in the midst of her ancient monuments and works of art, set as they are in the lovely frame of her most bewitching landscape. Fifteen years is a long time in the life of a people so lately returned to the political life of Europe. In these days old customs disappear and characteristic usages become modified so rapidly, that the "Letters of the President de Brosses" and the "Notes of Travel" of Goethe and Chateaubriand will soon be wholly obsolete. It is perhaps a regretful sense of the inevitable obliteration of the Past that has led us to undertake a finished picture of the Renaissance—the most brilliant moment of that Past—and while awaiting the mellowing effects of time and still more exhaustive research to offer to the general reader these few preparatory sketches which illustrate the peculiar features of the Italian genius.

The incomparable attraction, which Italy has always had for the nations of Western Europe, depends chiefly on the fine natural sense of beauty which has led her sons to persevere in the pursuit of noble objects throughout even the most disastrous periods of her history. On this point she undoubtedly owes much to Greek culture. Epicureanism—which during the decline of old Rome was a sort of religion, fatal alike to the virtues of public and domestic life—moulded the minds of men of letters to that studied serenity, that elegance of thought and manners, which will ever remain the special gift of Italy, in her language, art and literature. It is in Pompeii, a city as much Greek as Italian, that we shall study this first characteristic, and it is this contemplative life, rudely disturbed for a time by barbarian invasions and the

disruption of the old system of society, which afterwards reappears, in a deeper and far purer form, in the quiet seclusion of the cloisters.

The great monastic foundations of Italy—the Benedictine monasteries of Subiaco and Monte Cassino, the Franciscan establishments at Assisi, and the Carthusian at Naples, down to the humblest convents perched on solitary heights, are essentially an expression of the poetry of the nation. There is nothing, in all the rest of Europe, during the middle ages, approaching to the nobility of sentiment shown by the monks of Italy in their ardent mysticism, and their tenderness and simplicity of heart. The monks of Ireland, who were tormented by dreams of aggrandisement, are shrouded from our sight in the twilight of legend, while the confraternities of Italy were living in the full light of history—only a few years intervening between the death of Joachim of Flora and St. Thomas Aquinas. In the most troublous days of the Middle Ages, Italy, which actually suffered more than any other part of Christendom, has an air of peace and even joy. While humanity elsewhere is puerile, morbid, even despairing, Italy sees her first civilization blossom in the very teeth of the quarrels between Pope and Emperor, and beauty revives under her eyes in the works of Giotto and Nicholas of Pisa. She drives Dante into exile, but weeps at the recital of the *vita nuova*. For her the *new life* also was beginning—the first beams of the Renaissance were already shining in Florence, Rome, Pisa, Sienna, Venice, Orvieto and Perugia. While the Europe of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, wearied out with long years of calamity and fruitless pursuit of the ideal, gets drowsy over dry scholasticism or makes merry over the bitter mockery of the *fabliaux*, Italy lends a hearing to Petrarch and Sainte Catherine of Sienna, admires Masaccio, Fra Angelico, the two Bellini, Signorelli and Perugino, and will soon be hearkening to the appeals of Savonarola.

In our sketch of this lofty monk and leading citizen, we encounter another quality of the Italian mind. To whatever heights of enthusiasm these ardent souls may rise, they never lose sight of earthly things and the temporal interests of their country. The moral evils, political disorders, and continual servitude of Italy caused them emotions of pain, which found expression in the *Canzone* of Dante, the sermons of Savonarola, and the works of

Michael Angelo. These three men furnished the lofty tradition which the moderns—Leopardi, Manin, Manzoni, Pellico and Poerio —have carried out in a patriotism, often still loftier and more enlightened.

It is remarkable that Dante and Savonarola were willing to accept the intervention of the foreigner—the Ultramontane—in Italian affairs. Machiavelli fell into the same error, justified in part by the political conditions of the Peninsula, while the moderns have replaced Guelph and Ghibeline prejudices by a higher and more comprehensive patriotism. But will the very best among them ever make men forget the grand protest against wickedness, which Dante passed on to Savonarola, and the monk of San Marco handed down to Michael Angelo?

In the course of the Renaissance we shall see the political faculty developing itself, as well as the sentiment of beauty, and we have purposely placed these two aptitudes side by side. Indeed the art of polities presupposes, as the first element of its existence, that sense of reality whose progress we shall note equally among sculptors and painters, historians and diplomatists. The dominant feature in the history of the Italian schools, is this return to naturalism in art, and its conciliation with the ideal. The superiority of the historical literature of Italy lies in the agreement it always maintains between particular notions of material prosperity, applicable to the cities of the Peninsula, and those general laws which constitute the philosophy of politics. The unformed art of Giotto is in the development of painting what the Chronicle of Dino Compagni is in that of history; and Masaccio may be compared with Villani. The same expression of real natural life is joined with grace in Raphael, and with grandeur in Michael Angelo, in the same way as in Machiavelli and Guicciardini a precise knowledge of economic facts conduces to the perfection of political science. Two of the studies in this volume are devoted to the evolution of Italian genius in Painting and History. Art and politics were in those days so emphatically two different expressions of the same aptitudes of mind, that they were sometimes confounded, and the terms of art applied to matters of government and revolution. Their politicians were, at the same time, artists; and worked away at their *chef d œuvre*, the establishment of a tyranny or the ruin of a neighbouring state

with the serenity and persistence of Michael Angelo suspended from the roof of the Sistina. They pursued their ideal without scruple, by every possible means—treason, poison, and the dagger, diplomatic intrigue and conspiracy. This ideal accepted by all, whether writers, condottieri, or princes of the Church, belonged of right only to the choice spirits endowed with *virtù!* Machiavelli has analysed the conditions of this *virtù*, a word which, like *morbidezza*, has no equivalent in other languages. He has described several of these *virtuosi* with a curiosity mingled with admiration, just as Leonardo da Vinci has painted lizards, or a Medusa and serpents. Certainly their achievements, violent as they were, had, like their character, a tragic magnificence. They belonged to a race and time which had nothing of the common-place or vulgar. *Mors acerba, fama perpetua, stabit vetus memoria facti* said Olgiati, at the foot of the scaffold. They stand out proudly, surviving in history, like Raphael's and Titian's portraits of dangerous diplomatists, and the equestrian statues of *condottieri* by Andrea del Verocchio and Donatello.

Unfortunately these *virtuosi* were the ruin of Italy. It is a singular fact that the Peninsula which, in the middle of the fifteenth century, was the school of diplomacy for Europe, and the most enlightened nation in the world, was powerless to maintain its own independence. The employment of mercenaries, the rivalry of the different States, and their internal dissensions, are surely only the secondary causes of this fact. The principal one was the fatal ambition of the three leading families of Medici, Borgia, and Della Rovere. From the height of the pontifical throne they aimed at absolute dominion over the whole of Italy, till they should reduce it to being either their own fief or that of the Church. The salvation of the country consisted in union and loyal federation, and they divided it into parties, the better to dominate over all. The documents relating to the Borgias, published by Gregorovius,* and the diplomatic discussion between Machiavelli and Leo X. in 1513, in which the former Secretary of State advises the Pope to abandon absolutely the policy of Julius II., leave no shadow of doubt concerning the responsibility, we will not say of the Holy See, but of the Pontiffs who occupied it, from Sixtus IV. to Clement VII. It

* Lucrezia Borgia. Trad. Ital. : Florence, le Monnier, 1874.

was the mistake of these Popes to believe that their work would survive them. Leo X. died perhaps in the enjoyment of this illusion, but an unprecedented catastrophe opened too late the eyes of Clement VII. A portrait of the first is given in this volume, and the second figures in the picture of the great event of his reign, the sack of Rome. These two Medici, who possessed some of the rarest gifts of mind, but who sacrificed to nepotism and temporal ambitions their first duty as Italian princes and sovereign pontiffs, will supply the last touch, the final shadow to the picture. Some element of superiority was plainly lacking in Italy, in politics as well as morals, namely, a more clear sense of duty—more delicacy of moral perception—more earnestness. She possessed too much *virtù* and too little virtue.

She has dearly expiated, in her penance of three centuries, these defects of character and errors of conduct. Europe, led captive by the ideas and literature of France, long looked down upon the effete country of the Renaissance, which had produced no great poet since Tasso, no great painter since Titian, no great politician since Sixtus V., though well aware that this land of the dead, still so attractive to the living, had yet some *dilettanti* basking in its sunshine, votaries of the burlesque or the bucolic muse; and that she now and then produced some veritable philosophers, as Vico and Beccaria, and some distinguished scholars in the persons of Maffei, Tiraboschi, and Muratori.

However, at the commencement of the present century men began to understand that a little band of exiles, dreamers and poets still cherished an ideal Italy.

In Giacomo Leopardi we have given a sketch of the most austere and unfortunate of these writers, who gave to their country a second intellectual Renaissance, and were preparing its political renovation.

Italy has ceased to be any longer a mere geographical expression. May she never undervalue the generous political ideas with which her greatest poets and best citizens have been for the last fifty years inspiring her.

ROMAN CAMEOS AND FLORENTINE MOSAICS.

CHAPTER I.

ITALIAN LIFE AT POMPEII, AND THE DOCTRINES OF EPICURUS.

THE student of history, like a meteorologist at the approach of a thunder-storm, must observe and watch the signs which precede great moral revolutions. He must not bow to destiny as an irresistible, mysterious power, but endeavour to discover the *causa matrix* of each important occurrence; looking both ways—like a double-faced Janus—back into the past and forward into the future.

There is a concatenation of causes and events, undiscerned by the common eye, which links century to century, and certainly one of the most effectual causes of the decline of Rome under the Empire was Epicureanism, which not only furnished a system of philosophy but aimed at regulating the political and

private life of its followers. It formed, indeed, a sort of state within the State, gathering to itself a considerable body of adherents from among the most honourable and enlightened citizens, whose general characteristics we will point out briefly, before studying their public and private morals in detail.

From the beginning of the Empire, all Romans, raised above the plebeian class, either by rank, wealth, education, or bravery, belonged to one or other of the three following parties—the DISSATISFIED, the SATISFIED, or the INDIFFERENT. As to the idle and brutalized populace, which then, as now, occupied the lowest quarters of Rome, it counts for very little in any history of the morals and politics of the time. For it, the distribution of eatables and sesterces was the question of importance,* or the sensational exhibition of criminals strangled publicly, and then thrown to the lions!

The party of the DISSATISFIED was a select one, in which the Stoics—with the exception

* Satirized by Juvenal as those who

> For two poor claims have long renounced the whole,
> And only ask the Circus and the Dole. Satire x., 77.

To these he gives a contemptuous pity as creatures of circumstances, but pours out the vials of his scorn on the selfish and luxurious upper classes.

of Seneca—constituted the preponderating element, retaining the loftiness of soul and republican traditions which their sect had religiously maintained from the days of Cato of Utica. Thrasea and his relatives were the most illustrious among them, and the most persecuted under Nero. Unfortunately the teaching of the Stoics, which inculcated a supreme disdain for earthly interests and possessions, and pronounced absolute isolation an essential condition of virtue and happiness, was better adapted to train sages than citizens. The Stoics, therefore, like their successors in after-ages, the monks and hermits of mediævalism, were less useful to their country and generation by their ascetic lives, than by the magnanimity they often displayed in their deaths. Seneca himself knew how to die as manfully as Thrasea.

The party of the SATISFIED was more numerous, and embraced very various elements. First, the courtiers and familiars of the Emperor, divided by the etiquette of the day into three divisions, according to the degree of favour they enjoyed. To the two first divisions belonged the principal senators, the members of the Consulate, and the most distinguished among the higher functionaries

of state—such as the Prefect of Egypt and the prefects of the city and prætorium. The third division contained the learned classes —the artists, writers, and astrologers whom the Emperor condescended to admit to his table. It included also apparently a few dancers and professional buffoons. These last were their master's faithful adherents up to the very eve of the day that saw him smothered in his bed like Tiberius, or dragged to execution like Vitellius. Then came the freedmen of the reigning families, to whom the governments of the Empire had been more than once entrusted, and whose scandalous insolence has been exposed by Tacitus in the persons of Pallas and Narcissus. Petronius, too, has made fun of their absurd luxury and pretensions in his Trimalcion, who changes his dress eleven times at the same banquet, sends to the Indies for mushroom spawn, and to Athens for swarms of bees. These freedmen in their turn were surrounded by satellites of their own, whom they kept in idleness, and sometimes upheld in flagrant violations of the law. Among those of Trimalcion, the author of the Satyricon immortalizes a fraudulent bankrupt and former public crier, who after making

and spending a large fortune had fallen again into the most abject poverty. Let us add to these the fashionable idlers who were ready enough to pay court to the wealthy freedmen—young adventurers who, at twenty years of age, were disposed to take life as a party of pleasure, and ruined spendthrifts ready, like Ascyltes and Polyænus, to abstract with equal adroitness a new cloak from a saddle, or a bag of money from a wine shop. All these, however differing in character and position, were really clients of the princes whose rule either promoted their interests or sheltered their corruptions. It is against them that Tacitus has aimed his bitterest satires on the patrician manners of his day, and that Petronius, who had known them so well at the court of Claudius and Messalina, composed the strange romance which he took care, ere he opened his veins to escape the tyranny of Nero, should come like a last legacy of irony into the hands of the Emperor himself.

Between these two extreme parties—nearer perhaps to the second, came that of the INDIFFERENT, who professed and practised the doctrines of Epicurus. This, in the first century, was certainly the most numerous of

the three divisions we have cited. While the Stoics, decided though powerless enemies of the Imperial rule, withdrew proudly from public affairs and brooded in silence over the liberties they had irrevocably lost, the Epicureans who cared less about the form of government and its abuses, and were, indeed, many of them culpably regardless of the absolute principles of justice and morality, were mainly solicitous to preserve the independence of their private life. While the Satisfied, whose fortunes and very existence depended on the goodwill of Cæsar, threw themselves recklessly into the excitements of excessive pleasure, and ruined themselves with absurd extravagance, pandering to their royal master's vices by the flattery of imitation, the Indifferent enjoyed the most discreet and refined pleasures in the retirement of their well-appointed homes. As the attention of historians and moralists has been little directed to these Epicurean abodes, we have less exact portraits of their inmates than of either their austerer or more servile contemporaries. We are now, however, in a position to reproduce the more salient characteristics they presented in the days of the first Emperors, thanks to the uncovered spoils of

Pompeii, and will show with what thoroughness these amiable men, but degenerate citizens, arranged their private life in all its details, so as to lose sight of their duties, and be themselves lost sight of; and how this Epicurean party, in spite of its unpatriotic attitude, exhibited in the decline of Rome, the last remaining graces of the ancient world.

To do this we must consider the Roman and Epicurean life of the period in its three leading features—the degradation of Political life, the decay of Family and the progress of Social life.

The Roman of the republic had lived as a citizen within the walls of Rome and amid the dust of the Forum—talking and hearing talk—discussing candidatures, appointing the chief functionaries of the State, by word or deed taking part in some personal conflict every hour of the day, sometimes even engaged in subduing a popular rising from the rostrum itself. From early morning he had been in his *Atrium*, with the waxen portraits of his ancestors around him, giving audience to the eager crowd of clients who had left their dwellings, lantern in hand, before the break of day. Each day thus spent in the

exercise of his civic rights had given him renewed consciousness of his own individual power. In the shade of his severe and simple home, his wife meanwhile had been presiding at the spinning-wheel, submissive as a slave to her husband, but nevertheless wrapped up in his dignity and ready on her part to pass on authoritatively to her children the manly, personal and political traditions of their father.

Now the Forum is empty. Tiberius has finally put down the popular assemblies, and succeeding emperors have encumbered the spot with Greek temples, porticoes, triumphal arches, obelisks, and votive columns, which cut it into narrow spaces, where the great impassioned multitude can meet no longer; and the Palatine above, which overlooks it with its thousand Pretorians, keeps down with an iron hand the proscribed traditions of the past. Informers increase and multiply, noting the words and gestures, even the glances, of the citizens. Imperial terrorism has begun, the time is come for Romans, jealous of their freedom to think of spending their cultivated leisure far from the capital. The annoyances of Roman life, which had long been descanted on by the poets of the Empire, furnish an excellent pretext for

flight. Who could live in this bewildering tumult, in these narrow, dusty streets paved with big blocks of hard, grey stone, encroached upon, moreover, by hucksters' shops and taverns, where you were hustled and jostled by such a motley throng?—where young sharpers with ring-laden fingers elbow the religious processions of priests of Isis and Cybele, and shipwrecked seamen were for ever chanting the doleful lamentations of their pretended misfortunes. The entertainments too which Rome was now able to offer were not less distasteful to sensitive organs than the din and bustle of its streets. Since outdoor discussions had been forbidden, the plebeians were attracted by exhibitions that were revolting to people of taste—for instance, in the reign of Claudius, by a Jew seven cubits high, and by a centaur preserved in honey in the Palatine itself—and in the reign of Nero by the spectacle of a child with four heads and a number of gluttons gorging themselves in public. The best course now open for people of taste, was to go into *villeggiatura*.

We may well believe that the Epicureans were not the most backward of these voluntary exiles. As soon as the fine weather set

in, they gladly left behind them the level horizons and saddening monotony of the Roman Campagna. Horace was able to content himself at his Sabine farm, and Juvenal, a foe to all the prevailing fashions, esteemed himself happy in the possession of a garden in the neighbourhood of the pensive Frosinon. But Pliny travelled north, as far as Como, Tibullus and his friends repaired to the smiling valleys of Tuscany, some went down to Sicily and Magna Grecia, to Tarentum or Syracuse, where, detained by the soft breezes from Africa, they often took up their winter quarters. The greater number, however, stayed in Campania, and took refuge on the shores of the Bay of Naples, at that time a favourite summer resort of the *beau-monde* of Rome. It was by no means a matter of indifference at what point of the Bay, or on the Neapolitan Campagna, one took up one's abode. There were two very distinct quarters, and we should do well to discriminate between them. On the right of Naples, beyond the hills of Posilippo, between Puteoli and the Cape of Misenum, and particularly round the now deserted little gulf of Baia, magnificent baths and other places of entertainment had sprung up for the in-

habitants of the sumptuous palaces around. There can be no doubt, from the express testimony of the Latin writers of the period, and from the considerable remains still standing, that this district was the point of attraction for the Imperial families of Rome and their numerous clients and followers. The favourites of Augustus and Nero found here a repetition of the feasts and orgies, and sometimes of the tragedies of the Palatine. The licentious manners of Baia were already infamous in the time of Cicero, to whom Clodius made it a matter of reproach that he had a villa there. Seneca, unable to sleep for the nightly revels, calls the neighbourhood a house of entertainment for all the vices. Famous courtezans of Rome resorted thither for the bathing season, and needy spendthrifts, according to Juvenal, came to eat up the money of their creditors by feasting on the oysters of Lake Lucrinus. Boats went out in the evening, laden with flowers and musicians—sailing out idly to the open sea, to return only with the dawn of morning; and Nero, who was by his own showing a great artist, took care to select this charming and joyous spot, for drowning his mother on a starlight night in the blue waters of the lake.

But this quarter, invaded by the tumults and perils of the city they had left, did not attract the more peaceable and prudent citizens. On the contrary they found safer and pleasanter retreats to the left of Naples, among the fertile fields at the foot of Vesuvius and on the steep rock-bound shore which separates the Bay of Naples from Salerno.

At Herculaneum and Pompeii, at Stabiæ and Sorrentum, one could at least live in the retirement of a provincial solitude. These four little towns, therefore, were peopled by Epicureans, either as visitors or regular inhabitants. There are many convincing proofs of the truth of this assertion—for example—the moral and material contrast between the two regions, the preference expressed for Pompeii, Herculaneum and Stabiæ, by men of studious habits and refined tastes—as Cicero, for instance, who wrote his treatise on duty in the first-named town, and Phœdrus, who took refuge there from the rancour of Tiberius and Sejanus, and Pomponianus, the friend of Pliny the Elder, in whose company he endeavoured at Stabiæ to escape the catastrophe of the year 79 :—in the remains discovered under the lava and ashes of the volcano, which testify to the intelligent tastes

rather than the wealth or luxury of the inhabitants; by the works of art with which they had surrounded themselves, where bronzes and marbles nearly always reproduced the pleasing creations of the Grecian chisel of the period of Praxiteles and Epicurus; in their paintings, rather voluptuous than licentious, where Bacchus, the god of indolence and effeminacy, incessantly appears as the presiding genius of festivities in which gaiety had not yet been suffered to degenerate into licence; and, above all, in the *papyri* of Herculaneum, where nothing at present has been deciphered but the writings of Epicurean thinkers. We can therefore venture to repeople the Pompeian dwellings with their old inhabitants, satisfied that this town, once destroyed in the reign of Nero and immediately rebuilt, bears the precise date of the Epicurean period, when the political party we describe displayed its most original and distinctive characteristics.

There is no need to describe here the well-known type of Greco-Roman dwelling that prevailed at Pompeii and Herculaneum, but to see what manner of life it bears witness to. It will suffice to recall the two essential parts into which the Roman dwelling was

divided—*in front*, entering from the vestibule the unroofed atrium, formerly the arena of political life; *beyond*, and hidden from the eyes of visitors to the atrium, the peristyle into which the private apartments opened, and which was as it were the sanctuary of domestic life. The upper floor was only used for the slaves and for storing the provisions of the household.

Let us knock at the door of Sallust, or Lucretius, or the tragic poet. No window opens upon the street from the master's apartments on the ground floor. The outer wall presents an impassable barrier both to the curiosity of passers-by and the tumult of the streets. We will make our way however, in spite of the jealous care that guards its entrance—still attested by the symbolic mosaic in the vestibule with its life-like representation of the fierce house-dog, and the warning inscription "*Cave canem.*" There are no clients in the atrium. This Epicurean *villeggiatura* was fatal to them. We know that the wealthy and extravagant were ready enough to take with them to Baia some of their faithful visitors, paying them some ten sesterces a day to increase the pomp of their retinue, but those who pre-

ferred enjoyment to ostentation, weary of the obsequiousness of these poor creatures, were only too happy when out of Rome to have their morning hours to themselves.

On the eve of their departure, they had perhaps, like the patrons described by Martial and Lucian, distributed among them sundry leavings—some mantles somewhat the worse for wear, or togas that had been washed a little too often, in exchange for their assiduous attentions—their forced marches in the blazing sun beside their patron's litter when he took an airing, and their offerings at the Saturnalia or the New Years' feasts, of wax-lights, or napkins, or Damascus plums. The decline of this old republican and religious institution, which had been a chief element of the patrician power in Rome, was not more rapid in the first century than the decline of political life.

As the clients became useless they were humiliated in countless ways. Horace commends the device of making one's escape at the back while they were doing homage in the atrium, while Seneca judged it more humane to send them away at once.

So it was that the *atrium*, formerly the domestic forum, underwent modifications

similar to those that had befallen the forum of the people. It is no longer here the important section of the house, as in the noble palaces described by Vitruvius, where affairs of state were wont to be discussed in full assembly. At Pompeii it generally appears to have been of less importance than most of the private apartments. Usually a peristyle has been built to it surrounding the court, with a number of little rooms opening upon its four sides, adorned with paintings like those in the inner chambers, where the clients, with clouted shoes, described by Juvenal, would certainly never have been admitted. And, after all, since Cæsar now reigns sole and supreme over the destinies of the republic, and since the Conscript Fathers, relieved of all the cares of patronage and shorn of their credit with the plebs, will only be deliberating to-morrow upon sauce for the turbot, would it not be better to people the diminished atrium with those bronze divinities, the work of the Grecian chisel, placed on their marble pedestals beneath the shadow of the portico, or in the centre of the basin of the impluvium? guests, always pleasing and graceful, and who, at least, would not, like the starveling

clients, disturb the quiet of one's morning hours, or recall one from disdainful forgetfulness of the old claims now abandoned for ever?

If we penetrate a little further beyond the atrium, we shall still better understand to what an extent the most precious traditions of the Roman spirit have suffered loss—for the dwellings, whose ruins we are questioning, will show us no deeper traces of *family* than of *public* life—and it is the Epicureans who are mainly responsible for the disappearance of the domestic hearth. It may fairly be granted that the patronage of clients had had its day, and that the Epicurean patrons only took advantage like the rest of the world—like the Stoics themselves—of the inevitable decline of the system. But they exempted themselves at the same time from all the duties and responsibilities of married life. They took for their motto the saying, which Horace attributes to husbands who regret their former independence—*Melius nil cœlibe vitâ*—nothing better than celibacy. Formerly it had been every citizen's duty to the State, and to the race, to found a family. The perpetuation of the *gens* was a necessity under the republic.

Under the Empire, the Stoics, for the most part, still remained faithful to the old traditions, and their wives, some of whose names history has handed down to us—such as Arria and Fannia, often showed themselves, at the supreme moment, as heroic as their husbands. As to the idlers and spendthrifts, the freedmen of the princes and the rest of their creatures, it mattered little to the interests of Rome whether they were altogether free or entered into the married state after the manner of Trimalcion, whose wife, Fortunata, is treated as a common adventuress, ordered to dance the tight-rope for the amusement of his friends, and then to drink wine without moderation. It was evident that this class of Roman society, constantly augmented by fresh recruits, could only disappear with the Empire itself; but it was a much graver evil that celibacy should obtain among men who, by maintaining the sanctity of the domestic hearth, would have been able to consolidate and perpetuate their party together with their name and political traditions. They could have made a stand against the inroads of despotism while preserving the purity of family life, and have given force to that passive resistance of

theirs, which remained ineffective from lack of purpose and continuity. But Epicurus, or rather the disciples who exaggerated his doctrines, had otherwise ordered it; and selfishness, indolence, and the attractions of a life of ease and pleasure soon detached the greater number of Epicureans from the restraints and sacrifices of married life. The evil had already become serious in the year 18 before our era, when Augustus lamented before the Senate the increase of celibacy and the lax behaviour of women. The law, *Poppia Poppæa*, was powerless to control these abuses, in spite of its severity, and had long been a dead letter when it was abolished by the codes of Honorius and Justinian. Petronius satirizes the Roman taste for celibacy, and the rapidity with which patrimonies were consequently changing hands, in his picture of Crotona, where, he says, one only meets two sorts of persons, the adopters and the adopted, and where no one takes the trouble to bring up children, those who have heirs not being admitted to the feasts and spectacles, but obliged to hide their heads among the rabble, while bachelors, unencumbered of near relations, are raised to the highest honours and considered

the most skilful of generals and the most virtuous of men. As to the Romans who had not avoided marriage from the first, an easy system of divorce enabled them any day to loose their bonds, and this legal remedy was, indeed, resorted to with scandalous frequency. Many women, according to Seneca, counted the lapse of time not by the different consulates but by the number of their successive husbands; some of them, according to Juvenal, not even waiting until the traditional withering of the foliage that adorned the bridal bower, would be married to eight husbands in less than as many years. A quæstor was, in one instance, deprived of his office by Tiberius for having, on the day after his nomination, divorced the wife whom he had married on the eve of it to secure the object of his ambition. The Roman ladies, in the time of Epictetus, were eager for the republic of Plato, which would abolish marriage altogether; although modern law, in league with modern manners, had already emancipated them from the primitive yoke of conjugal submission. Their liberty of action was unlimited. They went to festivals and theatres, accompanied by their friends, and attended by the male *confidant*

whose whispered asides anticipated the name and office of the *cicisbeo* (whisperer) of modern Italy. The husband who is, perhaps, already meditating a divorce, addresses his wife respectfully by the title of Domina (Madame), and the clients, who tremble before her, by that of Regina (Queen). As to the children, born between two divorces, and often brought up under the third or fourth wife of their father, they are given over to the care of some Greek slave who teaches them the hollow rhetoric satirized by Petronius or to some designing pedagogue who corrupts them.

The Epicurean dwelling confirms the report of history upon the manners of the period, and shows pretty clearly how completely the Romans, after having renounced *public life* and its privileges, were also detached from *domestic life* and the charities of home.

This house is very small, and arranged to accommodate a solitary master rather than a family. Some few slaves, and as many friends, fill the *triclinia*. If the number of the guests be doubled, the *œcus* or great saloon, opening both to the peristyle and garden, receives them at its two tables with

their long couches. Along the portico is the *exedrum*, with its semi-circle of marble seats, the hall reserved for conversation, the library, the picture-gallery, the lararium—that family museum, sacred to the domestic deities no longer believed in!—the bath-room, with a covered gallery beyond, then the garden, with its two foot-paths, and its little plot of turf where one sups in summer under the trellis, better adapted for a quiet chat than for exercise. The private apartments consist of two or three little cells where the master of the house and his guests can rest at night. In Pansa's house, the most extensive in Pompeii, besides the rooms designed for special uses, such as the triclinium and the lodgings for the slaves on either side of the atrium, and the shops and shopkeepers' lodgings which face the street on three sides, there are only three little closets that can do duty as bedrooms. Nothing could be more completely what we should call *bachelor's quarters*. As to the ladies of the house, a sort of harem has been reserved for them, apart from the rest of the dwelling—the *Gynæceum*, of which express mention is made by Vitruvius, and which certainly had a place in all the dwellings of ancient Rome.

At Pompeii, however, it is very rarely to be met with; the most noteworthy example of it is in the house of Sallust, where it has no communication with the apartments of the peristyle, but by a side entrance, guarded by a slave. Its two little cells are lighted from within by windows opening under a little portico with red columns. Among its decorations we notice a painting of the adventure of Actæon. There is some analogy between this Epicurean house of Sallust, whence married life is not wholly banished, and the abode of a Mussulman in the East. You meet with the same rigorous separation between the divan, where the master spends the day with his sons, and his friends and slaves, and the women's quarter with its one entrance so scrupulously guarded. The two dwellings are equally impenetrable to curious eyes. In both you find the little bath with its mosaic pavement, and the inner court where a murmuring fountain lulls to idle reverie, and the little garden full of gorgeous flowers, enclosed by high walls, well adapted for the mid-day siesta, but you vainly seek in either for the true domestic hearth.

Nevertheless, all trace of noble aims has not disappeared from these retreats of Roman

villeggiatura. If the Roman citizen and paterfamilias has vanished from the scene, there still remains the Italian of the south, whose Greek education has made him an artist, and inspired him with a taste for beauty and culture that has for ever lulled to rest any regrets for what he has lost or willingly renounced. In his youth—at about his twentieth year—he visited Athens, still peopled with philosophers and literary women, and adorned with statues ; and he has come to the conclusion that under this clear sky and beside these smiling shores, with a little egoism and a good deal of resignation, life may still have charms even for a conquered people. He has neither listened to the austere preaching of the Stoics nor the discourses of the Cyrenaics, who professed to consider a life of dissipation the chief delight of man, but he has made a pilgrimage to the gardens of Epicurus, and enrolled himself among the followers of that temperately indulgent philosophy which has already lulled the senses of the Hellenic world, and sought to moderate the desires of the flesh by a constant supply of the most refined pleasures of the mind.

On his return to Italy he organizes for

himself a mode of life at once graceful and convenient, which he will never change. His first care is for his dwelling, which he shields carefully from the too glowing sun and from all the changes of the seasons. Vitruvius, to make his art meet all the requirements of the day, has laid down precise rules for the orientation of the different apartments. The winter dining-rooms and bath-rooms are to be built with a view to the winter sunset, that the sun may warm them towards evening; the bedrooms and libraries are to face the east, to be cheered by the rising sun, that will also protect the books from the effects of damp. The summer drawing-rooms look to the north and those for spring and autumn habitation to the east, that the windows being closed towards evening, a medium temperature may be maintained. The letters of Pliny give a description of the villas in which the amiable advocate led an almost sumptuous life.

One can see how the writers of the Empire came to describe their refined leisure with such relish—there is hardly one of them, from Horace to Ansonius, who has not vaunted the delights of his interior and detailed the pursuits of his leisure hours. Pliny the

Younger, the richest perhaps among the lettered Epicureans, was also the most enthusiastic. The letter in which he describes his villa in Tuscany is a real dithyrambic. The game of his woods is the best and the most abundant in the world, the arable land on his hills does not contain a single stone, and in that favoured region the winds do not blow, but breathe. And then there are those two villas of his on the shores of Como, which he has named Tragedy and Comedy!

In this last, at the water's edge, Pliny can fish with a line without so much as leaving his bed. How pleasantly the days pass in these favoured abodes! Pliny awakes at seven, but does not rise till eleven; in the interval he meditates, then sleeps, then dictates a few paragraphs, then takes a little walking exercise in his galleries, or is carried about his gardens in a sedan; rests a little, then takes another airing, reads a few pages aloud to exercise his lungs, walks again, and takes his bath; then he dines, sometimes alone with his wife, sometimes with his bachelor friends, listening the while to a reader; with the dessert appears a comic actor or a performer on the lyre; then he takes another walk, conversing meanwhile

with his secretary. To-day he receives visitors, or rides on horseback, making the round of his domain ; to-morrow he will catch birds or fish, quite at his ease, seated quietly in the shade near his nets, a book or tablets in his hand. He has bought a statuette of Corinthian bronze, and enlarges on its merits with all the delight of an amateur; he has just been eating some plump thrushes which Flaccus has presented to him, and he glorifies them in a charming note of thanks. But if Flaccus had only sent him a bundle of the wild asparagus cut from under the vines, which with a fresh egg sufficed for Juvenal, Pliny, the artist and epicure, would have pouted, and written nothing.

One thing was indispensable to complete the felicity of our Epicureans—the absence of applications for assistance or relief, in fact the enjoyment of absolute quiet. Imagine the slightest interruption in such a well-regulated life, and all would be spoiled. They have chosen the companions of their daily recreations with the utmost care. An African slave, strong and unscrupulous, is installed at the threshold to keep all others at bay. The *odi profanum vulgus* of Horace was a maxim daily put in practice. In order to

observe it effectually, one must take care to see this unsavoury populace as little as possible. In Pompeii all noisy industries, such as taverns, were banished to the most out-of-the-way quarters. More eligible and quieter ones, such as goldsmiths' shops, appear to have been grouped together in the manner of bazaars in the East.

Little shops, sometimes carried on outside the houses of the wealthy, served to sell the wine and oil harvested by the proprietor. The aristocratic streets by these means enjoyed a delightful calm, nor were the inhabitants much disturbed by the rumbling of carriages. There were not many equipages in Pompeii, within whose walls no stable has yet been discovered. Traffic would not be easy for carriages in these narrow streets with their many crossings, where one sees from one footway to another big blocks of granite placed like stepping-stones for the use of foot passengers on a rainy day. Wheel tracks in the pavement, often very deep, only prove that the pavement dates from the foundation of the town, the primitive arrangement of roadways having been preserved at its prompt rebuilding. Moreover we know that in virtue of the Heraclean code the singular

police regulation was maintained with more or less vigour in all the cities of the Empire, which forbade in Rome the traffic of carriages during the first ten hours of the day, reckoning from sunrise.

To prevent being disturbed by the sight of the "profane vulgar" when taking one's airing, it was only necessary to draw the curtains of one's litter. After all, for men of taste, the streets and fields could offer few attractive sights. The paintings of the period bear witness to the disdainful indifference felt by artists and connoisseurs for the life of the people. In all the frescoes of Pompeii one never meets with a single subject ever so remotely resembling those so dear to the Flemish masters, and to Callot and others in our own day, of the pleasures and occupations of humble people; unless there is now and then some comic situation calculated to provoke a laugh—such as an obstinate donkey stiffening his legs while his master pulls him along violently by the tail. Perhaps there may be sometimes a mischievous caricature levelled at the plebeians in those grotesque pigmies which are for ever appearing at Pompeii; sometimes the crows, their mortal enemies, fall upon them

and maul them cruelly—sometimes armed cap-a-pie, their enormous heads buried under a helmet made in the shape of some vegetable, and their spindle legs half buried in their native marshes, they stand sentinel under battlemented walls, ostentatiously guarding the interests of the republic. The domestic painter, too, seems to have chosen his subjects from the curious beings who occasionally relieved the accustomed monotony of the streets—this half-naked negro leading a little ape by a string, visitors just landed from Egypt or Syria, and tolerated for a while at the doors of good houses—this other ape, clad in purple, taking his two sons for an airing—or an open-air concert to attract those who have no taste for queer animals. Two examples of this last subject have been found in Pompeii; one of them a very fine mosaic, discovered at the villa ascribed to Cicero, bears the signature in Greek of Dioscurides of Samos.

Four travelling musicians have stopped before a house. The first, to the right, clad in a green and yellow tunic, with a mantle folded back and knotted round his waist on account of the heat, is lightly touching the tambourine. His neighbour, in a white

mantle, old and fat, bowed down and weary of his monotonous talk, plies the drum sticks. Behind them a woman plays the flute, whilst a ragged unkempt urchin blows the horn. All have a vacant smile on their coarse weather-beaten features, as they perform their barbarous music with the greatest attention, but all their efforts are in vain, no one stops to listen, the door of the house they are favouring remains pitilessly closed and not one obolus falls into the tambourine.

The Epicurean mode of life has disappeared with the men who adopted and brought it to perfection, but the marvellous setting in which it was placed still survives, and we can better understand the spirit that once animated it when we are ourselves under the spell of the seductive scenery where it found so congenial a retreat. The Bay of Naples, better than any other spot of Italy, fulfils the picturesque ideal of those two great poets, Horace and Lucretius, who were both disciples of Epicurus. The shady nooks and verdant dells in which Horace delighted, each watered by its bubbling spring, are to be found there, as well as the majestic scenes which Lucretius has described in his immortal verse ; the noble outlines of the

mountains, the plains clad in verdure ever new, their luxuriant vegetation supporting a teeming population, the calm and radiant seas, where ships keep gently gliding with their bird-like sails. And, above it all, the infinite azure, whose enchanting smile diffuses over earth and sea a joy wholly divine.

To gaze on this lovely scene, where grace and magnificence combine to charm, to drink in the spirit of it, and then to remind oneself that to-morrow will be as to-day—is not this to enjoy in its fulness all that nature can give? The dwellers here must have felt so far from Rome; and the almost absolute solitude of the eastern shores of the bay must have added heightened charm for the artist and the dreamer. Pompeii, nestling here in the bend of the shore, was shut out from all consciousness of the turmoil of Naples, while Pozzuoli and Baia were also hidden completely from view by the heights of Posilippo. Capo Miseno, the islands of Procida and Capri, the steep promontories of Sorrento, and the mountains of Stabia closed in the bay like a lake, leaving apparently only one little aperture to the open sea beyond. Behind it were Vesuvius and the deep valley, with its luxuriant growth of

vines and mulberries climbing up the lower heights of the Apennines, whose azure summits bounded the horizon.

If we station ourselves now on any quiet evening upon the upper steps of the amphitheatre of Pompeii, or on the terrace of some house abutting on the Herculaneum gate, we see the sharp mountain-peaks in the east, and the rocky isle of Capri, slowly veil themselves in a robe of azure haze, pierced here and there by long rays of pale gold from the setting sun as it sinks slowly to rest—and then the purple reflections dance upon the ripples of the sea till they, too, slowly vanish. Then Vesuvius and the wooded heights of Castellamare take a more and more sombre hue, till all forms and colours fade away like the visions of a dream. If we look towards Naples and Portici, some late-returning vessels may be seen spreading their white wings to the breeze, till they also steal away, and disappear among the shades of night. The murmur of voices and all the sounds of rural life are hushed, and one hears nothing but the gentle whisper of the little waves as they break upon the sandy shore. Then we take note of the rifled houses, overgrown with briers and brambles, the deserted

forum and the silent streets of Pompeii, and think pitifully of the brilliant civilization that once bloomed under this cloudless sky, and now lies buried beneath these ruins. We understand how the men of letters and of leisure, and all the artists of the Empire, must have loved the solemn grace and beauty of the spot. They found here unruffled calm—that peace which Lucretius, their ruling spirit, besought from nature with such a piteous cry. "It is here," wrote Cicero to Attius, the confidant of his joys and sorrows, "it is here that one finds life's best consolation." *Locos animos ad consolandos accommodatus.*

It is just here that one would like to turn over the leaves of those Epicurean books recovered from the lava of Herculaneum. We could wish that the fragments of Philodemos' works, deposited in the museum of Naples, were here in Pompeii itself, at the service of the cultivated traveller. We could enter still better into the spirit of the selfish and solitary life we have been describing, after dipping into this system, at once so logical and so finite, which, by way of relieving a man of his cares, took away his interest in everything, making a silence and a void around him in order to steep his

senses in forgetfulness, rocking him to sleep like a sick or petted child. It cradled him in this fashion up to the very moment when the arms of death embraced him, accustoming him to the thought of the inevitable visitor whom it would behove him to receive with equanimity. Little by little it succeeded in detaching him, even from this seductive life with all its wealth and pleasures, by dilating to him on the instability of all these cherished possessions. What matters it whether he leaves them to-morrow or to-day, so that he is ready to depart with the grand air, at any moment, without changing countenance at the summons? "For we live in a city that nothing can secure against death," says the charred manuscript at Herculaneum. It is even permitted to the philosopher to take his own time for retiring from the feast of life, after partaking discreetly of its choicest dishes—to rise from the table and throw away the half-drained cup, instead of drinking it to the dregs. "Petronius," says Tacitus, "in order not to allow death to hurry him, opened his veins, then closed them and opened them again, to have time for more converse with his friends. He discoursed with them, not upon the immortality of the

soul and the high themes of the sages, but upon cheerful and pleasing topics. He rewarded some of his slaves, chastised others, reseated himself at table and calmly fell asleep, so that his death, suicidal as it was, appeared to the world to proceed from natural causes."

Conducted in this way, life was verily, according to the old maxim, *a preparation for death*, while it still possessed all the conditions of happiness described by Philodemos in his numerous treatises—on rhetoric, on the virtues and vices, on music, on pride, on religion and on death—all of which hinge upon the single maxim, *Refrain thyself*. The wise man despises the human race, and leaves it to the rhetoricians, whom he pronounces the parasites of the people, to battle for the common cause with high-sounding eloquence. For himself he is too upright a man to meddle with public affairs. "The exercise of the political faculty," says Philodemos, "is useless both to the State and to the individual."

Untrammelled by the State, the Epicurean will not compromise his domestic independence either, more than is agreeable to him. It suits him better to have no posterity, and

he would esteem himself unreasonable indeed to lament that he dies alone and leaves no son behind him, since he has been exempted from so many evils. He has made a good exchange in foregoing the pious regrets of his children, and he will die indifferent to the execution or violation of his last wishes. A few faithful friends are a treasure dearer to him than family affection could furnish, and are a source of ever-increasing satisfaction. The Epicurean system seems to have gladly left its followers in the enjoyment of this one noble sentiment, so fitted for the solace of the weary soul. Indeed, the only depressing maxim which it appears *not* to have adopted, is the bitter exclamation of Aristotle, "Alas, my friends, friendship exists no longer!"

Such were the manners and morals of those among the Romans whom we styled, at the beginning of this study, the party of *the Indifferents*. That there were artists and poets among them no one will deny, or that the majority of them were worthy men in the main, but, what strikes us very forcibly is that they were bad citizens. History has a right to call them to account, for they were answerable, to a great extent, for many of

the mad excesses of the emperors who preceded the Antonines, and for the general decay of public morality at Rome.

It is only in the contemplative life that scepticism can fail to be injurious—in politics it furnishes an easy excuse for not doing one's duty. These men kept aloof from every struggle, from every generous action and effort, till all the great interests of society were a dead letter to them; they neither promoted nor opposed any movement whatever—they were politically dead. With them the Cæsars were quite at their ease, for they were inert witnesses of the imperial follies, and nothing more. There was no need to condemn *them* to banishment, confiscation or death, measures often found expedient against the Stoics and the rest of the party of the Discontented. Did not the first Cæsar, with his acute intelligence, pronounce a sort of *pro domo sua* in that singular discourse of his concerning the accomplices of Catiline, in which he confirmed before Cato and all the Senate the sceptical doctrines of Epicurus? He saw clearly enough the future to which they tended, and that they would soon be most complaisant auxiliaries in the political system which was now the destiny of Rome. Pre-

sently Caligula invites his favourite horse, Incitatus, to a dinner, and announces his marriage with the moon, arrays himself as Jupiter Tonans, and produces storms of thunder and lightning by machinery. Nero passes himself off for Apollo Musagetes, has fifty crowns awarded to him at the Hellenic games, solemnly espouses his freedman, Pythagoras, and has his gardens illuminated with the bodies of Christians enveloped in flaming pitch. But all these outrages on common-sense and common humanity make no impression whatever on these enlightened disciples of Epicurus. Instead of arousing their righteous indignation, the crowned ogre of the period probably appeared to them as natural a concourse of atoms as any other.

However that may be, Rome continued to fall from one depth to another of moral and political degradation. It would be difficult to trace with any certainty the course pursued by the last Epicureans of the Empire. Records concerning them, or any other section of Roman society, become, as time rolls on, fewer and less authentic. Besides, with their waning importance parties lost their distinctive traditions, until in the closing days of the Empire society seems to have

resolved itself, according to the point of view of the observer, into the two great divisions of *rich and poor*, or of *Christians and Pagans*. Those, however, who up to the fifth century persisted in living according to the Epicurean system, even when they ceased to call themselves by the name of their master, were never roused from the apathy it engendered. Like the Epicureans of Herculaneum and Pompeii, who did not hear the first threatenings of the volcano which overwhelmed them, the unheeding Ansonius, whose villas were situated on the frontiers of the invaded Empire, went on describing, in harmonious verse, the joys of the angler amid the perfume of his roses, up to the very moment when the desolating torrent of barbarian hordes was descending upon the civilization of the ancient world.

CHAPTER II.

ITALY AND THE WESTERN NATIONS OF EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES—THEIR POETRY AND THEIR REAL LIFE.

The period, commonly spoken of as *The Middle Ages*, is bounded at either end by two great catastrophes—the first being that irruption of the Northern barbarians which overwhelmed the Græco-Latin civilization—the second, the invasion of the Turks, which destroyed the Byzantine Empire and brought Asiatic barbarism into Europe. In the interval between these two calamities, the domestic life of Christendom was one long term of suffering that seems like a chastisement.

The old towns and ruined monuments of Europe bear pathetic witness to the saddened lives that must have been led by the men of former days. We cannot see all these evidences of the care they took to hide their goods and fortify their dwellings, without the conviction that they must have suffered the torments of continual mistrust, and

occasional terror. Observe the labyrinths of narrow, tortuous streets, some of them looking like *cul-de-sacs* but always communicating with each other—notice the vaulted passages where only a glimmering twilight struggles in at mid-day—the dreary wastes by the river-sides, like that by the Ghetto, from which the benighted wayfarer saw the corpse of Giovanni Borgia thrown into the Tiber—mark the covered bridges connecting the palace with the prison or citadel, like that by which Clement VII. took refuge in the Castle of St. Angelo from the sack of Rome; note the massive signorial strongholds, like those at Florence, fit to brave any assault—the castles perched like eagles' nests on the summits of a mountain-peak, like Acqua-pendente, or ranged along a wall of rock, as at Narni, or protected by Pelasgic ramparts, as at Cortona, or squeezed between the sides of some ravine, as at Bacharach and Oberwesel on the Rhine; and then remind yourself that the enemy is everywhere, well armed and unscrupulous. Now it is the vagabond soldier in rusty armour—now the ragged, wandering student, who begs by day, and at night lies in wait for the timid townsman under the shadow of the

church-porch—now it is the gipsy lurking at the city-gate to steal away the children, or the baron watching from the dungeon-tower for the travelling merchant, that he may come down upon him across the vineyards with his armed followers, to rob him of purse or life. The farms of the Roman Campagna are still furnished with square towers, vestiges of the days when Petrarch dared not go from Ostia to Rome without being escorted by 100 horsemen, when the Colosseum was the lurking place of banditti and savage dogs, and one did not venture into its solitudes, even in broad daylight, but at considerable risk.

To brigandage within add the constant menace of sudden attack from without. In France, in the ninth and tenth centuries, it was the Normans who were carrying fire and sword to the banks of the Seine and Loire; and during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was the English, encamped among the ruined hamlets, who, from time to time, committed fearful slaughter, as at Limoges; while all along the Mediterranean shores it was the Arabs and Saracens, who made their way as far as Genoa and set fire to Pisa, and whose corsairs were spied upon

from the crannies of the cliffs, like those between Salerno and Sorrento, or from the heights of bastioned churches, like the Cathedral of St. Nicholas at Bari. Hardly were the Moors driven out of Spain before the Turks began to advance upon Hungary and Italy, to renew for 150 years the apprehensions of Europe.

Every evening, as soon as the shades of night began to fall, the inhabitants of these old towns, so stoutly defended and yet so often sacked, shut themselves into their gloomy dwellings, with loop-holes for windows and courtyards as damp as cisterns, let down chains across the entrance of every street, imprisoned the Jews and the lepers within their respective quarters, and shut up the dogs, "*sous peine de la hart*," says the constable of the Hotel de Ville, while the melancholy tolling of the curfew-bell resounded through the dark and silent town. Now was the time for meditation, and bitter enough must have been the reflections that haunted the sleepless beds of those who dwelt in manor or monastery or under the shadow of cathedral towers, as they passed in review the evils and disabilities of the times they lived in. Certainly life must

have appeared a doubtful blessing. Whichever way they looked, they saw only lawless violence on the part of man and fearful scourges from the hand of nature. The brutality of manners, the atrocity of the penal laws and the acknowledged right of the strongest, seemed to carry on in Western Europe the great extermination of the human race, begun in the fourth century by the Huns, and Goths and Vandals, amid the ruins of Rome. At Vitry, in the twelfth century, the King of France burns 1,300 inhabitants in the church; at Paris, in the fifteenth century, the Burgundians massacre in the streets and prisons 1,600 persons in the space of twenty-four hours. A Duke of Burgundy enters on horseback the church of Nesle, flooded to the height of half a foot with the blood of poor creatures who had fled there for refuge, and who lay around naked, dead, and dying, says the chronicler. "And when the said duke saw the carnage, he remarked that he saw *moult belle chose, et qu'il avoit avec lui de moult bon bouchiers!*"

If the war of those days was so horrible, what shall we say of the justice? How compute the number of witches buried alive

—of gentlemen flayed, beheaded, hung by the armpits? of poor wretches torn in quarters, strangled, or tied in sacks and drowned like vermin? the number of heretics, monks, flagellants, doctors, dreamers, magicians, even poets, who rotted in dungeons, or died at the stake? At Cologne—to cite only the most illustrious martyrs—the Communist brother, Walter Lollard—at Avignon, Bishop Gérand; at Florence, the poet Cecco d'Ascoli; at Rome, Arnold of Brescia; and John Huss at Constance! In 1239 183 heretics were roasted all at once before the Bishops of Champagne and Count Thibaut, *le Chansonnier!* At Paris, in 1304, 114 Vaudois; and all over Europe the revolutionary monks of St. Francis—some burned at Marseilles for their doctrine of poverty, some in London, *quod de religione male sentirent*, says the act that condemned them —and Francis of Pistoia, at Venice, for having preached that neither Jesus nor His first disciples possessed anything of their own. As soon as one opens any of these old chronicles one feels, as it were, deafened by the cries of torture. "Here," said Dante, as he reached the threshold of Inferno —"here sighs, tears, and piercing lamenta-

tions, resounding in the starless ether, made me weep."

> Quivi sospiri, pianti, ed alti guai
> Risonavan per l'aer senza stelle,
> Per ch'io al cominciar nè lacrimai.

But these were the least of the terrors of the Middle Ages. After all, one could live in one's cell, away from the myrmidons of war or justice. But ten times in a century Europe was visited by famine and pestilence, and death reaped such a harvest as threatened to sweep the human race from the face of the earth. In 1419, "when the clock strikes eight," writes the *Bourgeois de Paris*, "there is such a crowd at the baker's door, as one could not believe in without seeing it—little children groaning out 'I die of hunger.' Boys and girls might be seen, thirty at a time, on a dunghill, dead of cold and hunger." In 1421, the officer appointed to kill the dogs was followed by a number of poor wretches who devoured everything—*chair et trippes* as the chronicler puts it. Three years before this, "towards the end of September," he writes, "deaths were so frequent that they had to dig great ditches in the cemeteries and lay the corpses, by thirties and forties, side by side, like so much bacon, just powdering them with earth."

"I have seen with my own eyes," says Boccaccio, "two swine in the street turn over the ragged clothing of a dead man with their snouts, and then in about an hour turn round and round and fall down dead. Many died in the street, others alone in their houses, whence the neighbours would soon perceive the odour of death. It often happened that when a couple of priests were carrying the cross before a dead man, two or three coffins would be ranged behind the first, and instead of one corpse to bury they would find there were six or eight."

"The Jews were accused of infecting the air and the water," says De Naugis, "and people rose against them everywhere—especially in Germany. Thousands of Jews were massacred and burned." At this very time Germany was put under an interdict by the Pope. At Strasburg 16,000 men died without receiving the last sacraments, believing themselves damned. Eight hundred thousand flagellants went from the Rhine into Flanders, and to Rheims, half naked through the snow, lashing themselves with iron-pointed scourges and chanting doleful dirges in their frenzy.

But nothing has ever equalled the desolation of the tenth century. Our forefathers

underwent such misery that the end of the world, which was to take place on New Year's day, A.D. 1000, was expected with as much hope as fear. Out of seventy-three years there had been forty-eight of plague, and famine, and cannibalism. In Aquitaine, the sick, putrefying before death released them, crowded about the church doors, and died before the relics of the saints. Famine was ravaging the whole of Christendom. "Corn rose," says the Benedictine Glaber, "to sixty gold pieces the hogshead—the rich grew thin and pallid, while the poor gnawed the wild roots of the forest, and sometimes devoured human flesh. On the highway the strong seized the weak, tore them to pieces, roasted and ate them. Some lured the children aside with eggs or fruit on purpose to devour them. A man exposed human flesh for sale in the market at Tournus. He did not deny it, and was burned alive. Another went at night to unearth the same, and was burned also. In the forest of Maçon a wretch had built a hut, where he murdered those who sought shelter for the night. One of his guests took flight, having caught sight of human bones; and forty-eight heads of men, women, and

children, who had been his victims, were found there. Chalk was dug up from the earth and mixed with the scanty supply of flour. Wolves, attracted by the unburied bodies, would begin to attack them, whereupon those who feared God dug pits, to which they would drag their dying—the son his father, or the mother her son, or the brother would carry the brother, and then the despairing survivors would throw themselves down after their dead."

Death must indeed have been a release, when those who still lingered on, prostrate in the dimly lighted churches, gazing upon the formidable visions of the Apocalypse represented by the mosaics with their gilded backgrounds, seemed already to hear the trump of the archangel who should announce the coming of the Son of Man, and the last obsequies of the human race.

Plato teaches that the soul of him who dwells on the sights of beauty granted to us here below, rises on the wings of a holy enthusiasm to the regions of pure everlasting beauty. Here, on the contrary, and it is the great marvel of the Middle Ages—we see the afflicted soul disengaging itself from all the hideous miseries and deformities by which it

is surrounded, taking refuge in the pure Ideal, and losing itself in dazzling visions. As soon as the terrible year 1000 had passed away, the world became peopled with poets and *illuminati*, who sought to raise the souls of men to the loftier heights far from earth and earthly aims. The poetic dreams of noble spirits, rudely broken in upon by the barbarian invasion, again began to find expression in aspirations after faith, and knowledge, and heroism, and love.

The first and greatest of these ardent souls were the saints and mystics—poets of the inner life, who knew how to disengage humanity from its earthly trammels. St. Bernard, feeble and aged before his time, unable to retain any nourishment, and with scarcely the strength to stand while he addressed the people, yet attracted multitudes to his preaching, and when he had impelled them all to the crusades by his resistless fervour, returned in all humility to his leafy cell at Clairvaux, to resume his readings of the Song of Songs, which he meditated on till his death. "He walked one whole day," says his biographer, "beside the lake at Lausanne, and then asked where the water was!"

St. Louis remained so long in prayer

that he was seized with vertigo, and said to his servants, "Where am I?" St. Catherine of Siena prayed and held communion with God the Father till she swooned. St. Francis joyfully extended the same all-embracing love, to God and to his fellow-creatures, and the works of nature. He sold his coat that he might ransom a lamb from the butcher, converted the wicked wolf of Gubbio to gentleness, preached to the listening swallows, and called them his little sisters, and composed a hymn of benediction to his brother, the sun. Their contemporaries were convinced that the penitent of Assisi bore the marks of his Saviour's passion on his hands and feet, that St. Dominic held conversations with the Virgin Mary, and that Dante had seen the glories of paradise face to face.

Carried away by a real passion for the Ideal, the Mystics soon lost sight of the Church herself, her discipline and dogmas. Many of these pious souls through excess of love, threw themselves into heresy. One day towards the close of the twelfth century, a pious monk of Calabria, sunning himself in the convent garden, perceived a youth of marvellous beauty who held him a cup—and Joachim of Flora drank a few drops from the mysterious

chalice which could impart a knowledge of the revelation of the future—the vision of the everlasting gospel. Awestruck and adoring, he set out for the Holy Land, and on his return tarried in Sicily, where in a monastery on Mount Etna, he experienced for three days an ecstasy that was like an agony. "I was at his feet writing," says his disciple, "and two others with me; he dictated night and day, his face the while pale as the withered leaf of autumn!" What Joachim then saw, and afterwards announced to Italy and Christendom, was the final consummation of the law of Christ, which was to give way in the year 1260 to the law of the Spirit. "The Old Testament, that of the Father"—says the book in which the strange doctrines were afterwards collected, "has been the age of law and fear; the New Testament, that of the Son, the age of grace and faith; the third, that of the eternal gospel, shall be the age of love. The first has been the time of slavery; the second, the time of filial servitude; the third will be the time of liberty. The first has been a starlit night, the second has been the dawn, the third will be the full light of day. The first bore nettles, the second roses, the third will bear lilies." Joachim was not

persecuted. Dante placed him among the blessed, and gave him the title of prophet. His teaching, proclaimed by the Franciscans, who were expecting a general reformation of manners, took the listening ear of mediæval Europe, and awoke innumerable echoes in Italy, France, and Germany. In the fourteenth century on the banks of the Rhine, the brethren of the Free Spirit—Eckhart, Tauler, and Suso—combining the dreams of the Calabrian monk with the pantheistic speculations of neo-platonism—wound up, as it were, this long poem of mystic love by declaring that the true end of humanity is to lose itself in God by the action of the Holy Spirit, and that thus united the soul of man becomes no other than God Himself.

But the mediæval spirit thirsted after *knowledge* no less than holiness. It placed a school of science in every cloister. By the scholastics and Abelard, by St. Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, and Roger Bacon, it made an unheard-of effort to obtain universal knowledge. Through the Arabs and Byzantines it had received a partial acquaintance with the works of Aristotle, whom Cornelius Agrippa, in the fourteenth century, still pronounced the heathen

forerunner of Christ. By the help of Porphyry, it had rediscovered the representative metaphysical problem, and for three centuries kept on debating in the universities on the substantial reality of the ideal world, thus rehabilitating, unknown to itself, the Greek tradition of Pythagoras and Proclus. Never was a bolder curiosity brought to the search after truth! Five thousand students from all parts of Europe congregated round Abelard in the vineyard of Mount St. Geneviève—a motley crowd in whose ranks the future Pope Celestin II. sat side by side with one of the coming terrors of the Church, Arnold of Brescia. And when the young sage—at once orator, poet, doctor, and musician—had expounded in opposition to the entire scholastic world, realist or nominalist, doctrines which contained in germ the coming rationalism of Des Cartes and the scepticism of Kant, his tumultuous audience followed him in procession through the sombre streets with clamours of applause. Faithful to the end, they still followed him after his fall, in his flight into the desert, and built a whole town round the mud cabin in which the persecuted exile took refuge at last, from the curses and derision that assailed him.

A hundred years later appeared St. Thomas, *the dumb ox of Sicily*, who lived so constantly buried in reverie upon Divine things, that he would walk in meditative mood on the sea shore without being aware of a raging storm, and would keep uttering his meditations with closed eyes, while appearing to sleep.

He was a fellow-countryman of the great idealists, Parmenides and Joachim of Flora. When he had discussed all the questions of mediæval theology, morals, philosophy, and physics, and recorded his conclusions in his colossal work, it appeared that human wisdom had penned its last word, and *Albert the Great* (Albertus Magnus) declared the canon of science closed, till time should be no more.

However, in England, at the same period, Roger Bacon, shaking himself free of metaphysical subtleties, was going straight to the study of nature, according to the direct method of the Jews of Spain, and the Arab physicians of Salerno.

Accused of the practice of magic, loaded with fetters, and then set free by a pope,* he left embodied in his Opus Majus—together

* Clement IV., tr.

with some hint of certain discoveries reserved for the future—the great idea that the human mind can achieve all things by making use of the natural forces—an idea which perhaps went unheeded at the time, though it was certainly the great scientific discovery of the Middle Ages.

Such was the higher life of the soul in these difficult times, with regard to faith and knowledge. But the spirit of *poetry* was also abroad, and men took yet further consolation in the midst of the disorders of society and the sorrows of real life in imagining an ideal organization of society, and a sublime condition of the human heart.

Dante, in his Latin treatise *De Monarchiâ* has shown us the political dream of Western Europe. The universe was to belong to two masters, equal in dignity, while independent of one another, and both equally vicars of Christ—namely, the Pope and the Emperor. The Pope, the successor of the apostles, was to reign over the consciences of men ; the Emperor, as supreme suzerain, over all kingdoms, republics, and cities. Both were to be seated peacefully side by side in the holy city of Rome. Heavenly benediction and temporal prosperity were to descend together,

upon all the nations simultaneously, from the altar and the throne. There was thus to be a renewal of the propitious era, inaugurated in the time of Christ Himself, by Cæsar Augustus, the first Emperor. "St. Paul," said the Ghibeline poet, "called this epoch an age of blessing."

The Roman people—*populus ille sanctus, pius et gloriosus*—represented by its master, would then indeed be the minister of Divine justice, inasmuch as by means of universal conquest it would have given to the world the peaceful reign of law and order.

Let the Catholic and Imperial system be once thoroughly established, and the whole earth would become the heritage of Christendom; and the Christians of the West, undisturbed by internal dissensions, would recover the great object of their hopes and regrets—the tomb of the Saviour—from the grasp of the infidel. Certainly it was the crusades alone that had power to unite the nations of Europe in one common brotherhood, and to suspend the long struggle between the priesthood and the Empire. The Popes preached the holy war, and the Emperors led the multitudes to Palestine.

It was felt that if Barbarossa or Henry

VI. did not raise the standard of the cross, Charlemagne himself, whose resurrection was constantly being foretold, would rise from his tomb and march before the Christian hosts.

From Peter the Hermit to St. Louis, a profound yearning for the East was tormenting the souls of men. Barons and serfs, bishops and little children, were longing to behold the village of Bethlehem where the chorus of angels had sung on the first Christmas morning "Glory to God and goodwill to men," and the garden where the Redeemer had wept and prayed during His last night on earth.

When the first crowds set out at the close of the eleventh century, the village children kept asking whether each town they saw in the distance was not the Jerusalem they sought, and when Godfrey, from the height of a commanding hill, at last caught a glimpse of the beloved city, 60,000 pilgrims fell down on their knees, exclaiming through their sobs, "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!" "St. Louis," says Joinville, "the night before he died sighed softly in his sleep, and said in a low voice, 'Oh, Jerusalem!'" But the crusades, besides stimulating the

piety and bravery of the crusaders, gave an impetus to the poetical life of the Middle Ages. It dazzled the imagination, like a marvellous legend, to be told that yonder, on the eastern shores of the shining seas of Italy and Sicily, there were lands of promise where the sky is always blue and roses bloom all the year round, and where the miscreants they were about to drive out were enjoying a civilization compared with which the nations of the West were still in a state of barbarism.

More than one of the crusaders, forgetting both his own country and the holy sepulchre, stopped short at the Bosphorus, and stayed in Greece or the Archipelago. Feudal standards floated over St. Sophia and the Parthenon, and we can still see the ruins of the ephemeral sovereignties which they established among the most beautiful and famous sites in the world. On Taygeta, where the maidens of Sparta no longer lead the sacred dance, above the ruins of ill-fated Mistra burnt down by the Turks, the Gothic castle of Villehardonin still proudly rears its dismantled towers in the mountain solitude.

The deeds of an heroic age are sure to find

expression in heroic poetry. These brave adventurers—military monks and knights of the Temple, were pursuing an ideal of bravery and devotion that soon became immortalized in numerous epics and in countless songs. Their achievements seemed to reproduce the deeds of prowess of the ancient heroes, and to awaken in every nation a dim remembrance of the legends of a glorious past. Germany, by recounting the marvellous combats of Siegfried and Dietrich of Verona amid the mists of Rhineland, revived in her *Niebelungen* the primitive traditions it had brought from its Asiatic cradle, of the eternal conflict waged by the children of light against the giant powers of darkness. The Celtic family related the deeds of Arthur and his knights of *the table round*, the miracles of the enchanter Merlin and the distant wanderings of Titurel and Sir Percival, in quest of the Holy Grail,—that sacred cup from which the Saviour had partaken of the Last Supper;—while Spain in the *Romanceros*, was immortalizing the Cid, whose very corpse, from which the dauntless spirit had departed, seated upright in the saddle went on gaining mighty victories; and France was boasting

her mighty Charlemagne, and lamenting her Roland, whose good sword could hew down mountains and break the rocks to splinters! Barbarous epics, if you will, such as will never supplant the Iliad of Homer—but nevertheless utterances of a fearless faith, which nourished the chivalrous enthusiasms of the Middle Ages, and have left their traces on the noblest moments of its history.

There dwelt moreover, to the joy of all thoughtful souls, at the heart's core of these rude and simple legends, a subtle sentiment, infinitely delicate and near akin to fancy, the mystic love of woman—that pious platonic love of which Plato had never uttered a word—a religion which had its dogmas, its mysteries, and its martyrs, and of which Petrarch and Michael Angelo were the last high-priests. It first found utterance in Germany, in the legends of the Northern ocean, and the poem of *Gudrun* which proclaims the dignity of woman. To be able to love on, at a distance from the cherished object without being chilled by discouragement, and in her presence without presumption—to love patiently, to love eternally—was a virtue as great, in the eyes of a true

Crusader, as to brave the burning sands of the East, or to storm the dungeon-forts of the Saracens. If the songs of the Troubadours of Provence or Languedoc are sometimes troubled by the gusts of passion, the modest lays of the German *Minnesingers* never so much as utter the name of the beloved. Walter of the *Vogelweide*, indeed, makes one solitary mention of the name of Hildegund, the mistress of his soul. "Never," he says, "shall I have joy. . . . My heart's deep wound will never be closed, unless by the kiss of love—never will it close till she drops into it the balm that heals—it must ever remain open, for never never will she vouchsafe to close it." The fair-haired maids, with eyes of violet, listened in silence to these liturgies of worship, scarcely bestowing the guerdon of a smile—till the singer was among the dead—then they wept for him sometimes. The ladies of Mayence, clad in deep mourning, themselves bore the body of Heinrich Fraueulob to his grave in the cathedral-cloister, and poured copious libations of precious wine upon the sepulchral stone.

The greatest poet of the Middle Ages was

also the most accomplished lover. Dante went beyond mysticism, and attained to positive hallucination. He was but nine years old when he first met on May-day Beatrice Portinari, a child of eight, at the festival of Primavera. She was clad, he tells us, in a crimson robe of a right noble colour, and at sight of her he trembled, and heard within him a voice which said, "*Ecce Deus fortior me.* Here is a god more strong than I." Nine years later he saw her for the second time, robed in white, when she saluted him with such a noble dignity that he felt himself beatified. Other visions of her follow in succession. The *Vita Nuova* records eight of them. Love appears in a fiery cloud, and exclaims to him, "*Ego dominus tuus.* I am thy lord." One day, when Beatrice had not returned his salutation, he saw a youth clad in white, who wept, and said to him, "My son!"

He passed seven years thus on the verge of madness. During his last ecstasy such marvellous revelations were made to him that he had not the power to write them. He ends the story of his love by praying God to grant to him in paradise a sight of the

blessed Beatrice, who gazes face to face on Him who is blessed for ever and ever.*

But these dreams, which constituted the moral nobleness of the Middle Ages, were too beautiful. After all, perpetual reverie is not the natural occupation of the human mind; there was a time of awaking for these generous souls, and to a most painful reality. The bolder had been their flight into the regions of the ideal, the greater was their fall. Experience gave the lie to all their aspirations. The few high-souled monks who had inaugurated the life of mysticism remained isolated, powerless to attract the majority of their brethren towards the perfect life of virtue and knowledge. The monastic rule seemed only to have been instituted to be

* After the death of Beatrice, Florence seems to him desolate, like the Jerusalem of Jeremiah. In a pathetic sonnet he invites even *strangers* to share his grief.

"Deh peregrini, che pensosi andate,
* * * *
Che non piangete, quando voi passate
Per lo suo mezzo la città dolente?
* * * *
Se voi restate, per volere udire,
Certo lo core ne' sospir mi dice
Che lagrimando n uscirete poi.
Ella ha perduta la sua Beatrice
E le parole ch'uoni di lei puo dire,.
Hanno virtù di far pianhere altrui."
—"Vita Nuova. Edit. Barbera," p. 116.

speedily disorganized. The sermons of St. Bernard and the letters of Abelard in the twelfth century, and the depositions concerning the Templars in the fourteenth, witness to the astonishing victory gained by the beast over the angel in the very cloisters founded by the saints! Boccaccio visiting Monte Cassino, the first convent of Benedictines in Italy, shed tears at seeing the library open to the showers of heaven, and the tattered books lying in the dust. Ambrose of Calmaldole wrote in 1431 concerning the Basilians of Grotta Ferrata: "*Vidimus ruinas ingentes parietum et morum, librosque ferme putres atque conscissos.*" As the great teachers passed away, scholarship, delivered over to the cavillers, fell into senility. Duns Scotus identified the word with the state of being. Raymond Lulle invented *Le Grand Art*, or *Machine à penser*. The Cornificians gravely argued the question, "Is the pig which is taken to market held by the swineherd or by the cord?" Roger Bacon had no more worthy successors than the alchemists, whose researches only brought them an action for sorcery and the martyr's stake in the Place de Grève. Good Christians, who were looking to the Holy See for the salvation of the

world, too often saw the Church rent by the schism of anti-popes, or dishonoured by the simony of such men as Nicholas III. and Boniface VIII. The crusades had failed miserably, and among the soldiers of the Cross, those who had not fallen at Constantinople, or Antioch, or Carthage, far from bringing home the Holy Grail, the object of such pious yearnings, had only brought back with them into Europe the vices of Asia. "God is sleeping," says a troubadour, "while Mahomet triumphs." The Emperors, too, had disappointed the hopes of the political dreamers. Their struggle with Rome had crushed them. Nearly all had come to a tragic end, and now the hoary Barbarossa slept on in his cavern of Kyffhäuser,* surrounded by his knights, deaf to the summons of the Ghibellines of Germany and Italy, to whom his re-awakening might restore peace and liberty.

The days of heroism and enthusiasm were past, and as time rolled on humanity seemed

* On the hill of Kyffhäuser (1,353ft. high) may be seen the ruins of an imperial castle built by the Emperor Barbarossa, whose spirit is fabled still to haunt its chambers, and some among the peasants and miners affirm they have seen him with his head resting on his arm, and his red beard growing through the stone table at which he sits!—M. J.

to have dwindled to a meaner type. In the days of *Philippe le Bel* the world no longer belonged to the paladins, but to lawyers and attorneys! St. Louis was the last of the family of the *preux chevaliers*, whom the nations of the West had admired and loved ever since the days of Siegfried and Arthur and Charlemagne. But the heroes themselves, mortal like the rest, what had they achieved? What result was there from all their exploits and flourishings of the sword? Neither Roland nor the Cid had been able to drive the infidels out of Christendom. The Norman pirates had defied Charlemagne in his old age. What availed heroism? and further, of what avail was love? The pure platonic love of the troubadours and minnesingers? Here again the ideal is no sooner conceived than it fades away and vanishes, like the brilliant clouds that lose themselves in the purple of the setting sun. All the shortcomings of humanity — inconstancy, weariness, the pitiless advance of years, the inevitableness of death—unite to wither the tender blossom before the poet's eyes—so delicate of scent and frail of texture—which he adored so devoutly, without ever daring to gather it. Those who do not die in their

first youth like Beatrice, get married at last, like Laura, to some worthy gentleman who does not know so much as the name of Plato. It would be hard to say whether Dante or Petrarch suffered the more cruelly, or better portrays the disenchantment and regrets of the visionaries of the Middle Ages.

When a man has parted, one by one, with all his most cherished illusions, he betakes himself either to mockery or melancholy. These men of the Middle Ages did both. Satire took a new life, and the sentiment of melancholy acquired such an ascendency, as even pagan antiquity had never known before Epicurus and Lucretius.

Satire, in fact, appears everywhere. It peeps out from the grotesque grimacing gurgoyles of the Gothic cathedrals, and antics at the very altar, in the festivals of the Holy Mysteries. Its voice is heard in the farces performed at the corners of the streets, and in the licentious tales repeated from mouth to mouth in Paris and Naples; from the romances of Chaucer and Boccaccio, down to those of Margaret of Navarre. It may be seen in the frescoes depicting the Last Judgment, by Giotto and Orcagna and Michael Angelo; as well as in the tortures,

compounded of the horrible and the grotesque, portrayed in the *Divina Commedia*, and in the weird inventions of the last of the romancers who preceded Ariosto. It is especially conspicuous in that lengthy epic of Germany and Gaul, incessantly reappearing, with new additions, from the twelfth century to the days of Goethe—*the Romance of Reynard*. Reynard, as cunning as he is prudent, pretends to go on a crusade, while all the time he is snugly settled in his manor house. He is by turns, Bishop, Emperor, and Pope. But do not be anxious about him; he will never water the steps of the sanctuary with his blood like Thomas à Becket; he will not end his days, a prey to carking care in a miserable hamlet like Frederick II.; or alone in exile on a wretched truckle-bed, like Gregory VII.! Not he—the very prudent ancestor of the *bourgeois* of the future, the well-advised father of Panurge and Falstaff, and Scapin and Sancho Panza!

There is a total absence, however, of natural gaiety in this sorry jesting, with which the age cannot disguise its sadness—indeed, it groans and laments over its grievances still more than it jests. What it

needed above everything was a source of consolation that should be perpetual as its regrets, and infinite as its sufferings. A monk, whose own name has not come down to us, sought to meet the needs of the age by writing a lovely book—the "Evangel of Resignation and Self-Denial"—over whose pages the sad world bowed its head, and stilled its unrest with the expectation of the day of the Lord. "My son," says this book, "I descended from heaven for thy salvation; I took upon me thy sorrows; not necessity, but love drawing me thereto; that thou mightest thyself learn patience, and bear temporal suffering without repining. For, from the hour of My birth even until My death upon the cross, I was not without the suffering of grief. I suffered great want of things temporal; I often heard many murmurings against Me; I endured patiently disgraces and revilings. In return for benefits I received ingratitude!"

"O Lord, for that Thou wert patient in Thy lifetime, herein especially fulfilling the commandment of Thy Father, it is reasonable that I, a most miserable sinner, should bear myself patiently, according to Thy will, and for my soul's welfare endure the burden

of this corruptible life as long as Thou Thyself shalt choose."

These ineffable confidences between the believer and the Saviour appeased many troubled souls, but without giving them joy. The *Imitation* does not breathe the Divine calm of the grand old gospels; it does not say to the paralytic, in the tone of paternal authority, "Rise, take up thy bed and walk," but only "Kneel upon thy bed, pray and hope." It could not disperse the gloom which had become the spirit of the age.

To say the truth, this melancholy had become its chief charm. It pervaded society, like a plaintive melody sung in a cathedral choir, which rises to the very roof, floating from arch to arch till it fills the spacious nave, repeating from aisle to aisle the same lamentation — awaking the same refrain among the sculptured effigies of saints and bishops lying in state upon their tombs, and the many-coloured seraphim glowing on the storied panes of the great rose-window. There is not a single poet or artist of the period who has not his note of sadness.

The early painters of Germany, Flanders, and Italy—Holbein as well as Angelico, the Van Eyks as well as Sodoma—incessantly

reproduce the scenes of the passion, which the sculptors carve in stone or marble. The architects who built the sombre churches were poets of the same order as the musician who composed the Miserere of the Sistine chapel. There is no epic of chivalry that has not its grand episode of mourning—for instance, Roland's adieu to his sword and his brethren in arms, or the funeral obsequies of Siegfried, lying dead, according to the *Niebelungen*, among the flowers of spring. Dante pauses in his Ghibeline rage to bewail *Pia de'Tolomei*, or *Francesco da Rimini*, or the young sons of *Ugolino*. In the narrative of *La Vita Nuova*, when he arrives at the death of Beatrice, no language short of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, or that describing the visions of the Apocalypse, will serve to express his desolation. If he wants to describe the approach of twilight, he surpasses his master Virgil in the tender pathos of his imagery. "It is the hour which melts the heart of the mariner, and brings back the moment of parting to the mourner's heart; and makes the young pilgrim feel the pang of love as he hears the evening bell, which seems to mourn the loss of the dying day, that departs to return no more."

È che lo nuova peregrin d'amore
Punge, se ode squilla di lontano
Che paia 'l giorno pianger che si muore.

Villon himself, the gay *gamin* of the Paris of former days, who has twice narrowly escaped the gallows, and passed his whole life in evading the watch, while he pays his court to the pretty *saucissières* and *lanternières* of the Quartier Latin of that age—even he becomes solemn when he crosses the churchyard of the Holy Innocents. He talks more religiously even than Hamlet when fingering the empty skull of Yorick, and nothing can surpass the charm of his pathos when he muses on the fair ladies of a bygone age; then the theme of the poets, but now sleeping in the silent tomb. Bertha, Alice, Eloise, and Jeanne *la bonne Lorraine !*

Où sont-ils, vierge souverraine ?
Mais où sont les neiges d'autan ?

The snows of last year—(*les neiges d'autan*)—the beauty and the honour, the courage and piety, and all the sublime affections of the Middle Ages ! all the noble illusions in which humanity had been cradled during eight hundred years ! The ploughshare of grief had furrowed the human heart so profoundly that, even when the Renaissance was at its full, all the prophets of the

new era, whether writers or artists—Shakespeare and Cervantes, Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Durer and Michael Angelo—still belonged to the preceding age in virtue of their melancholy. Hence the heart-chilling monologue of Hamlet on Death—the sleep that would be so welcome if we could be very sure of not dreaming—and the last words of Macbeth concerning the life that is

> but a walking shadow; a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more—a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
> Signifying nothing.

Hence the tears of Don Quixote at his dying hour, when he understands at last the vanity of his delusions; hence the strange smile of the *Gioconda*, the dejected attitude of the marble giants reclining on the tomb of the Medici, and of the symbolic Knight of Death, stopped in the gloomy forest by his weird travelling-companion, as, motionless and already stiffening in his coat of mail, he gazes stonily on the last sands of the hour-glass, through which the ages have been running never to return again. Attacked at last by mortal languor, the Middle Age died of exhaustion—the collapse of its intellectual life being pretty evident in the *Barbouillamenta*

Scoti, which Rabelais dipped into, at the library of St. Victor.

But Italy came to the succour of the West. She had received from France her dialectic education, the Gallic traditions collected by Boccaccio, the tales of chivalry of the *Reali di Francia*—and Italy gave in return humanists, jurisconsulti, and artists. By her great Lombard physicians, her Venetian and Milanese printers, and the diplomatic missions of her statesmen—by Leonardo da Vinci and Cellini—she gave to the nations *the Renaissance*.

CHAPTER III.

DANTE, SAVONAROLA, AND MICHAEL ANGELO.

When Michael Angelo undertook to decorate the Sistine chapel, he is said to have shut himself in, with no other companions of his toil than the poems of Dante and the sermons of Savonarola. There, solitary as St. John on the rocky isle of Patmos, he composed the Apocalypse of the Renaissance, and, drawing inspiration at once from the visions of the poet and the prophecies of the monk, recorded those grand and terrible conceptions the first sight of which so disconcerted his contemporaries.

Dante had been dead 200 years, but the painful problems which had perplexed the Italy of his day were not yet solved. The men were still living who had shared the hopes and fears of Savonarola, and mourned his martyrdom; and the whole peninsula—splendid and miserable with its population of artists and bandits—was still groaning under the tyranny of native and foreign princes, and passing through as troublous times as

those of the captivity at Avignon, or even of the pontificates of Innocent VIII. and Alexander VI.

Before beginning his great work of *The Last Judgment*, Michael Angelo had witnessed the greatest calamity Italy had encountered since the barbarian invasion—namely, the pillage of Rome by the German and Spanish followers of the Emperor Charles V., followed by the slaughter of all the hastily armed defenders of Clement VII.

These three Italians, all witnesses of the dire humiliation of their country, had community of inspiration and feeling, as well as of suffering. We will endeavour to show what was the bond that united *Dante* and *Savonarola*, and how both were the precursors and teachers of *Michael Angelo*.

> Midway upon the journey of our life
> I found myself within a forest dark,
> For the straightforward pathway had been lost.
> Ah, me! how hard a thing it is to say
> What was this forest, savage, rough, and stern,
> Which in the very thought renews the fear.
> So bitter is it, death is little more.

These are the words with which Dante opens his great poem; and, truly, that pathway, lost in the gloom of night, is a fitting symbol of what all lofty natures experienced in those difficult times. No one could go on

his way without having to pause in the darkness, and wait anxiously till the light of dawn should enable him to resume his march. It was just this cheering light that failed to shine for Dante and, later on, for Savonarola. Both of them went on groping among the shadows till their tragic deaths.

Dante, like all the most generous and least penetrating spirits of the age, had espoused the Ghibeline cause, not understanding that even under bad or indifferent Popes, the Holy See represented, theoretically, the national independence of Italy against the empire of Germany, and the rights of nations throughout Christendom against the abuses of the feudal system, and the criminal ambition of princes. *Savonarola*, carried away by the republican tendencies of Italian monachism, endeavoured to restore, in spite of the Medici, the political institutions of the Florence of the thirteenth century. But manners had changed; the two aristocratic parties of Guelphs and Ghibelines, which had formerly played such an important part in the history of Italian cities, were now only a tradition of the past, and the reformer—agitating in a republic emptied of republicans—only succeeded in letting loose upon his

country the democratic turbulence of the two parties, known ever since by the undying names of *Arrabbiati* and *Piagnoni*—the enraged and the weeping. He had the simplicity or the pride to imagine that a Dominican could arrest the progress of the human mind at the very time when the Renaissance was printing Plato and, already possessed of a Leonardo da Vinci, was preparing a Raphael! He gave the populace of Florence the exquisite delight of burning books and works of art in the public streets, and surpassed Michael Lando and Masaniello in demagogic audacity. When it was a question of obtaining lodging for his monks, he said, "I will sally forth from my convent, and by the fury of the people I will enter one of your palaces, and say, 'Here will we stay!'" He wanted to placard the council-hall with this announcement, "People, whoever calls for a meeting of parliament desires to take the reins of government from your hands!" He preached the right of revolution. "People, when you hear the bell sound for the opening of parliament, rise, sword in hand, and say 'What do you want of us?' If any of the Signori shall demand the meeting of parliament *cut off his head.*

As for the rest, let them be declared rebels, and have their goods confiscated; and let every Gonfalonier, on taking office, swear that, at the first sound of the bell for summoning the council, he will *run and sack the houses of the Signori.* The said Gonfalonier shall have a quarter of the spoil for himself, the rest shall be divided between his followers." Finally, he prophesied the return of the foreigner, and received with his benediction the ill-fated train of Charles VIII. of France, which was a prelude to all the misfortunes of Italy in the sixteenth century. Dante and Savonarola were both of them mistaken, and their cause a failure; and yet Italy has surrounded their memory with a halo of unprecedented veneration. Raphael, who was painting by order of a Pope, has portrayed them both in the *Disputa del San Sacramento.* The portrait of Dante still figures in the cathedral of Florence as a doctor of the Church, and no one has erased from that of Savonarola the words inscribed upon it by a monk of his order—Fra Bartolomeo: *Hieronymi Ferrariensis a Deo missi prophetæ effigies*—Jerome of Savonarola, a prophet of God.

In genius, disposition, and destiny, they

showed an individuality which astonished both their contemporaries and posterity. Before and after them Italy could boast great citizens, and citizens who had suffered by the chances of revolution, or by the ingratitude of their countrymen, but none who had carried such ardent enthusiasms and such indomitable convictions into the arena of politics, who had presented so bold a front to defeat and persecution, instead of collapsing with the failure of their cherished hopes, or who had persisted so heroically in their course even to the point of martyrdom. This heroism, which was their most distinguishing characteristic, was all the more admirable since it had become very rare among Italians.

On a soil, fruitful in statesmen and diplomatists, devotion to liberal ideas generally stopped short of voluntary exile or death. It was so easy, at the end of a gallant fight for liberty, to accommodate oneself to circumstances, and console oneself amid peaceful studies, for the buffetings of public life! What a difference, in that respect, between Petrarch and Dante, and between Machiavelli and Savonarola!

Petrarch was, indeed, a favoured mortal.

He passed safely enough through the difficult Italian fourteenth century, with a certain melancholy resignation, consoling himself by the possession of sundry lucrative benefices. He attacked the simony of the Popes at Avignon, and the extreme depravity of their court, with stinging sarcasm, for which Babylon offered him in exchange flatteries, dignities, and canonries! Neither the Popes, nor the Emperor, nor the nobles of Rome, dreamt of bringing in the laureate of the Capitol guilty of a crime for his compromising alliance with the visionary tribune Rienzi. The bitter letter which he wrote to Charles IV., reproaching the poor Emperor for his cowardice, procured him a magnificent reception from that monarch at Prague, and the rank of Count Palatine. He passed the intervals between his embassies in the calm retreat of his library—a semi-solitude, the door of which was kept sufficiently ajar to admit the incense of the faithful.

In the warm weather he studied his Cicero under the leafy shades of the Certosa at Milan. "I want for nothing there," he said, "and the people of the neighbourhood bring me fruits and fish, ducks and game. My

income has increased, and my expenditure has increased in proportion."

Age came gently upon the canon-antiquary, basking in the sun at his villa of Arqua, writing melodious sonnets, and singing to the last in praise of the loves of his youth; until at length, on one lovely summer's night, alone in his study, save for the companionship of his white cat and his books, the good Petrarch bowed his head upon the Greek of Homer, and sank peaceably to his last sleep.

Machiavelli was less the favourite of fortune, for he fell from a greater height; but his disgrace did not amount to persecution, when forgotten or perhaps despised he fell into poverty. The great statesman, who had filled twenty-two legations, who had been four times ambassador to the Court of France, and twice to that of Germany, could no longer find bread enough at home for his family of four daughters and two sons. He would dine sometimes at Florence for fourteen sous, and then find only ten sous at the bottom of his purse to pay with. He buried his poverty in a wretched little farm at San Casciano, gossiping with the waggoners for pastime, and playing at cards and tric-trac at

the neighbouring cabaret with the miller and the butcher. When night came on, having had enough of humiliations, he would return to his library. "At the threshold," he says, "I doff my muddy peasant's garb, and don that of the courtly ecclesiastic. Thus fitly attired, I associate with the great men of antiquity and refresh my soul with the only food that agrees with me, and to which I was born. I am not afraid to commune with these sages, and always evoke a courteous reply, so that for the next four hours I suffer no ennui and forget every vexation. I enter wholly into their thoughts, and fear neither poverty nor death."

The heart of the old sceptic grew so hard that he could witness even the plague of Florence without any overpowering emotion. He traversed its streets and bridges, and wandered among the forsaken corpses in the cemeteries, listening to the horrid songs of the grave diggers, and going from church to church in hopes of finding some widow to console. One, whom he found one evening waiting for death on the steps of the altar in Santa Maria Novella, accepted his homage. "My soul found repose," he says, "in her mourning garb." Some weeks after this strange ad-

venture he died ingloriously from an attack of colic.

But Dante and Savonarola were of too noble a type to exchange their militant career for either Petrarch's green old age or the excruciating vulgarity of the last days of Macchiavel. Dante — proscribed by the Guelphs, and then condemned to the stake — went into exile, fully determined never to return to Florence but as a conqueror.

"I go my way," he said, "through every country where our tongue is spoken, a wanderer and well nigh beggar. I am like a vessel without a rudder, driven by storm from port to port and from shore to shore, a miserable spectacle for those who had pictured me so differently!" For twenty years he paraded his lofty misery though Italy and France. The bread of his hosts was bitter to him, and their stairs hard to climb! When he was offered his pardon if he would do penance at the gate of the Baptistry on the festival of St. John, with a white mitre on his head and a wax taper in his hand, "Behold," he writes, "the glorious reception offered to Dante after an exile of three lustra! No, that is not the road by which I shall return to my country. What! cannot

I enjoy the same sun and the same stars from any corner of the world? Can I not meditate upon truth in any place under heaven? and must I humiliate myself before all the people of Florence? I can get my bread in any land!"

Dante endured exile rather than abjure his political creed; Savonarola, certain of failure, persisted in his religious mission rather than abandon what he believed to be the salvation of Florence and the Church. He refused, when at the height of his power, to proscribe the partizans of the Medici, sparing by his magnanimity the very men who immediately formed a league against him, composed of monks and princes, libertines and atheists. At Rome, Alexander VI., whose vices Jerome had denounced, was lying in wait for a favourable moment to silence the rebel.

First he offered him the cardinal's hat.

"I desire neither hats nor mitres," said the Dominican, "only what you have given to the saints—death. A red hat—that of blood—is what I desire! (*un capello rosso, un capello di Sangue, Questo desidero*)!"

He had long been expecting it. He exclaimed from the pulpit, "This is the end of

our conflict—to die or to be cut in pieces—this is our faith, and our reward. We seek no other. When you see me put to death do not be troubled. All the prophets have suffered and died. My word cannot be a great verity for the world, but through the blood of many. Oh! ungrateful Florence! crucify me, stone me, I will suffer all for the love I bear thee!" If he would have given up preaching he would have been spared. "I cannot live," he said, "unless I preach." It would have been easy for him to make his peace with the Pope; but he saw, in a vision, a black cross hovering over Rome, and he openly announced the funeral obsequies of the Church to be at hand.

On the very day of his fall, when St. Mark's was besieged, while his friars armed with candlesticks and halberds were defending the entrance to the choir, Savonarola might still have fled; but he took the holy sacrament at the altar and, followed by the community, withdrew in full procession to the monastery, where he took leave of his disciples and blessed them.

Then he went down into the piazza and marched towards the prison amid the insults and revilings of the populace. His enemies

declare that he recanted under torture. On the evening before his death he continued to write his commentary on the *Miserere* until the paper was taken away from him. He slept that night with his head resting on the knees of his confessor, who noticed with astonishment that he smiled in his last sleep. When the executioner stripped off his monk's frock at the foot of the stake, it is said that he wept. But when the legate of Alexander VI., taking his hand, declared that he cut him off from the Church, "From the Church militant, yes!" exclaimed Savonarola, "but not from the Church triumphant."

Such constancy in sacrifice, and such lofty contempt for persecution, can only be explained by the possession of an infinite faith. Dante and Savonarola, in spite of their errors, were not sectaries sacrificing themselves for a party or an idea. They were Christians resolved to carry out the will of God as their consciences understood it; they were mystics and illuminati. But even their mysticism was of a kind as rare in Italy as their heroism. They were not like Joachim of Flora, nor like St. Francis of Assisi, nor Ste. Catherine of Siena. These noble souls had never experienced the bitterness of

human life. They had lived in an atmosphere of love and ecstatic tenderness, delighting their souls in the blessed visions of paradise; for them this earth, with its miseries and deformities, was but the illusion of a dream, and they had a foretaste, here below on the Saviour's bosom, of the bliss that should follow the eternal awaking. Angels visited their poor cells bearing flowers of dazzling beauty; Jesus smiled upon them from the altar, and amid the swelling notes of the organ they distinctly heard the encouraging voices of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Very different were the visions of Dante and Savonarola, imbued with the terrible side of Christianity, as they gathered it from the writings of St. Matthew and of St. John in the Apocalypse. It was nothing to them that the Sermon on the Mount had pronounced blessings on the mourners, and the meek, and the sufferers for righteousness' sake. What they saw with trembling, and revealed to their generation, was the revelation of the wrath of God, pursuing the sacrilege of apostates and heretics with eternal vengeance in this world and the next. It was nothing to them to be banished and derided and to suffer loss—men who, like

Ezekiel and Jeremiah, were ever brooding over the marvels of vengeance that were in store for humanity! Did not Savonarola already hear the first mutterings of the tempest about to burst over Italy when in the cathedral of Florence, or under the shade of the great rose-tree in his convent garden, he denounced woes upon his people with the accents of a Jonah? "Oh, Italy! Oh, Rome! I deliver you over to a people that will wipe you out from among the nations! They are about to come down upon you like ravening lions. War shall be followed by pestilence, and so great will be the mortality that the grave-diggers will cry out in the streets, 'Bring forth your dead!' 'Here is my son,' one of you will reply, 'here is my husband, here is my brother.' The grass will grow in the streets, the roads will be like woods and forests. Oh Rome! Repent and do penance! Oh, Venice! Oh, Milan! Turn you and repent! Oh, our God, we call on Thee to aid us! Where is Thy providence? Where is thy loving-kindness? Stretch out Thine hand to us! As for me I can do no more, I can say no more—nothing is left for me but to weep. Pity have pity on us, O Lord!"

The Dominican was for ever returning to this threat of a tragic to-morrow, whose shadow was upon him. One day, when he had a nearer vision than ever of the coming vengeance, he thundered out in the ears of the terrified city this formidable *Dies iræ* :— "I tell you, that God is enraged against you! The angels on their knees are entreating Him to strike. Good men weep, and exclaim, 'We can do no more to avert their doom!' The orphans and widows are saying, 'Our houses and substance are devoured, we can no longer live.' The whole Church triumphant above keeps saying to the Saviour 'Thou hast died in vain!' It is Heaven that fights against you; the saints of Italy and the angels are on the side of the enemy! It is they who have set them on—who have saddled their horses. The Lord cometh at the head of His saints—the armies of the blessed range themselves in battle! Where are they going? St. Peter, as he marches along, exclaims, 'To Rome! To Rome!' St. Paul and St. Gregory march on, crying, 'To Rome!' and behind them stalk pestilence and famine. St. John and St. Antonine exclaim, 'Forward to Florence!' and the plague follows them. St. Anthony says,

'Onward to Lombardy!' St. Mark cries out, 'Forward to that city which rises out of the waters!' * The patron saints of Italy lead on each to his own town to chastise it—St. Benedict to his monasteries, St. Dominic to his—and St. Francis against the friars! All the angels of heaven are marching sword in hand, onward as to war. Oh, time of tribulation, time of vengeance! Woe to this generation—that shall see the day when it shall rain fire and flame and brimstone! There will be such groanings as I cannot utter—trouble everywhere—the heavens troubled, God Himself troubled!"

But *Dante* had sounded still further the depths of the divine mysteries. He had seen not only scourges that should come upon the wicked, and sweep like a tempest over the surface of the earth—but had looked into the infernal chaos that should engulf the damned. He had descended from circle to circle, through the weeping and wailing multitudes of the doomed, down to the lowest depth of the abyss, into the very presence of Satan and Judas. He had seen by the lurid glow of the lightning, half extinguished by sepulchral vapours, the barque of Charon of

* Venice.

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the flaming eyes gliding over the black waters, with its freight of lost souls. Here were the gluttons lashed by rivers of frozen rain, all flayed and gnawed by Cerberus and howling like dogs—there the violent, struggling and groaning in a river of boiling blood. He had entered the very citadel of hell, where the burning towers and mosques glowed like red-hot iron. Beyond was the valley of mourning, the burial-ground of the heresiarchs, who made the stones of their sepulchres heave up with their lamentations; where, quite at the bottom, was a solitary tomb among the broken rocks, whence issued the most piercing cry, and inscribed with the epitaph *I hold Pope Anastasius.*

On a plain of arid sand were companies of naked souls upon whom showers of flame were falling faster than the flakes in a snow-storm, which the wretched ones were vainly trying to shake off from their shoulders. There were hypocrites in long procession dragging their chaplets of gilded lead round and round their tombs; robbers fleeing before gigantic serpents that were pursuing them; traitors, locked fast in the waves of a frozen sea, their eyes sealed as it were with frozen tears that they were not able to shed:

while those who had been guilty of simony, half buried, heads downward, in pools of liquid fire, were exposing their writhing limbs to the upper air. Sometimes the Ghibeline poet would tarry to exchange words of pity or reproach with some victim of everlasting woe. Pope Nicholas III. predicts the coming of Boniface VIII. and Clement V. to *la Città dolente;* while Ugolino, the tyrant of Pisa, reminds him how he and his young sons and grandsons died of hunger by the crime of Archbishop Ruggieri. Old Farinata, who once saved Florence from being destroyed by fire, raises himself proudly from his couch of flame, and towers above the other heresiarchs "as if he held Inferno in great contempt." Dante salutes him respectfully, and then Cavalcanti suddenly rises from a neighbouring tomb, and inquires with tears concerning the fate of Guido his child. "'Is he still living, or do his eyes no longer behold the sweet light of day?' When he found me tardy to reply he fell back into the tomb and came forth no more. But that other great-souled one, at whose desire I stopped, did not his aspect change or turn his neck, or bend his head." Sometimes the great exile takes part in the imprecations of

the damned, and breaks out into pitiless irony against the monstrous perversity of the Italians, to which Inferno is indebted for so many denizens. "Rejoice over thy greatness Florence. Thou art so great that thy wings flutter over earth and sea, and thy name resounds throughout the confines of hell. Among the thieves, I have met with five of thy citizens—a proud distinction for thee. Let other nations trample upon thee, since such is the will of fate." He invokes the vengeance of all the powers of nature upon Pisa—"the opprobrium of the nations of this fair land, *where doth resound the Si*,"* and addresss himself with withering scorn to the pontiffs at Avignon, who had deserted Italy to traffic in holy things in France. "It was you, oh pastors, the Evangelist beheld, when he saw the woman clad in scarlet, seated upon many waters and carousing with the king." In the paradise itself his Ghibeliné hatred puts this sentence in the mouth of St. Peter:—

> He who upon the earth usurps my place,
> My holy place, which vacant has become,
> Before the presence of the Son of God,
> Has of my cemetery made a sewer
> Of blood and stench.

* Italy,—it being an old custom to call countries by the affirmative particle "si" of their language, *e.g.*, Languedoc and langue d'*oil*.—J. M.

Both of these stern souls however, tortured as they were by presentiments of the vengeance of Heaven, had delightful visitings of tenderness. They loved, with all the devotion of a lover or a mother, this doomed Italy the thought of whose future steeped them in misery, and who mocked them, and made them her martyrs. Savonarola entreated Charles VIII. to spare the Florence he had conquered. "Most Christian king be merciful, after the pattern of thy Saviour. If there are sinners in Florence, there are also servants of God there. Oh pardon—Jesus Christ has pardoned much." He confessed with tears his love for the noble city, queen of the world in the fifteenth century, which he fain would save by sanctifying it. "O Florence—my love for thee unmans me. Ah, Lord God, I am beside myself on account of this people. I entreat Thy pardon." Dante, too, could not recall without emotion the Florence of his youth, the Arno beside which he had strolled with his crown of golden hair, his *bel San Giovanni*, and the *bercail* where he was cradled when "a little lamb." "You will be forced to quit Florence," was the prediction to him of Caccia Guida—"you

will be obliged to forsake all you hold most dear."

Tu lascerai ogni cosa diletta
Più caramente.

When he comes upon the poet Sordello in purgatory, he has just discovered that his companion is Virgil of Mantua, and, at the sound of Mantua, the shade, casting off his air of a recluse—

Rose toward him from out the place where first it was,
Saying "Oh, Mantua, I am Sordello
Of thine own land!" and one embraced the other.
Ah! servile Italy, grief's hostelry!
A ship without a pilot in great tempest!
No lady thou of provinces remainest!
That noble soul was so impatient, only
At the sweet sound of his own native land,
To make its citizen glad welcome there.

And when among the melancholy vapours of the second circle of Inferno, he sees Paolo and Francesca da Rimini, and says—

Speak, would I, to those two who go together,
And seem upon the wind to be so light
As turtle-doves called onward by desire,
With open, steady wings to the sweet nest
Fly, through the air by their volition borne—

is it not the voice of the exile himself, weeping the vanished past, which speaks in the words of the fair Francesca?—

nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria!

A tomb, at least, was reserved for him

worthy of his life. He died at Ravenna, at the very place where the old Empire of the West had perished at the hands of the Goths, the grandeur of whose remains still consoled the enthusiasts of the Ghibeline party in the midst of their bitterest disenchantments. Day by day he paced those deserted grass-grown streets, his severe countenance encircled by the red hood, as in Giotto's portrait, while the children, playing in the sun, would run away from the stranger who had "gone down all alone to visit Inferno," leaving him to kneel in prayer on the pavement of those Byzantine churches, under the stony gaze of the passionless saints in mosaic, with their backgrounds of blue and gold.

But it is especially the pine woods, which stretch from Ravenna to the sea, that are haunted by the memory of Dante. There, perhaps, he had the vision introduced in the first canto of the Divina Commedia—there, where, as far as eye can reach, rise from the pathless sands that border the Adriatic, gigantic pine-stems that look like rows of columns supporting their sombre roof; while about their feet the white oxen graze on the herbage and brambles that they trample under foot.

Towards evening some slanting rays cross the long shadows of the trees, glowing in crimson and gold as though they came through some richly stained church-window, and light up the twilight recesses of the sacred woods; then the solemn notes of the bells of Ravenna mingle with the sighings of the wind in the branches, and the lowing of the wild oxen; and, lulled by these plaintive voices, the weird forest slowly fades away from sight into the shades of night.

But no tomb guards the mortal remains of Savonarola. The winds of heaven have dispersed the prophet's ashes over the city he loved so ardently, and where, perhaps, in the days of mystics like St. Francis of Assisi, he would have died in the odour of sanctity, honoured in his last hours as one of the friends of Jesus. A picture, very characteristic of the period,* still to be seen in the Convent of St. Mark, naïvely represents the torture of the Reformer and his companions in its three principal phases. First, the altar is reared in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. Beside it sits the archbishop on his throne, with the three Dominicans kneeling at his feet, their hands tied behind their backs;

* By Pollajuolo.

then we see them going to the stake, escorted by the Brethren of the Misericordia; and at last, swinging from the high gibbet, surrounded by flames. Some Augustinian monks look on placidly from under the Loggia de'Lanzi; some of the citizens stand about gossiping in the Piazza; a horse passes, bearing two cavaliers on its back, while children run eagerly, each carrying a little faggot to make the fire blaze more merrily about the martyr's feet. But the artist was wanting either in courage or genius. There is no expression in the faces—he has given neither the fiendish delight of Savonarola's foes, nor the despair of his partizans, nor the baseness of the populace who hurl stones at the half-consumed victim, nor the frenzy of the women who, in their turn, prophesy and see visions. He has been powerless to depict the agony of the apostle as he extends his arms in the act of blessing the city, or the last look he gives to the mob of furious or despairing ones at his feet, as he utters from the midst of the flames his last cry, "Florence, Florence! what hast thou done?" It was the cry of the Hebrew prophet, "*Populo meus, quod feci tibi?*" which Dante had uttered not long before in his Convitto—the cry of

the heroes when, broken-hearted at the perverseness of men, they penetrate through the ruins of their hopes and plans into the mystery of death.

Some one had heard the cry of the dying monk, and vowed to respond to it. Michael Angelo was then twenty-four years old. He had grown up in the household of Lorenzo de'Medici, at the very centre of the Florentine Renaissance. His early youth had been passed amid splendid festas and literary discussions, in the princely villas of Careggi and Fiesole, where Marsilio Ficino set forth the views of Plato, and where Politian and the refugees from Constantinople expounded Homer. He had already known the delight of fame—the glory of being recognised as a sculptor greater than Nicolo of Pisa, Donatello, or Ghiberti. Probably no one in those brilliant assemblies was aware that this pure and thoughtful young man preferred the solemn imagery of the Divina Commedia to all the gay profanities of the Morgante Maggiore, and was at that very time writing a commentary on the margin of his Dante.

> He from the world into the blind abyss
> Descended, and beheld the realms of woe;
> Then to the seat of everlasting bliss,

And God's own throne, led by his thought sublime,
Alive he soared, and to our nether clime,
Bringing a steady light, to us below
Revealed the secrets of eternity.
Ill did his thankless countrymen repay
The fine desire! that which the good and great
So often from the insensate many meet,
That evil guerdon did our Dante find.
But gladly would I, to be such as he,
For his hard exile and calamity
Forego the happiest fortunes of mankind.*

He had been seen more than once among the hearers of Savonarola at Santa Maria dei Fiori, and at San Marco; but his genius protected him throughout life, if not from passing discredit, at least from persecution. Valued and honoured, like Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, he might, like them, have turned away with calm indifference from the painful spectacle presented by political affairs, and have consecrated his artist life entirely to working out his inspirations of beauty. Pope Julius II., who loved him, summoned him to Rome to paint the ceiling of the Sistine chapel—a work which occupied him for five years. Already great in sculpture, he was then handling the brush for the first time, grinding his colours for himself, and working away in solitude in his hammock suspended from the roof. It was the period

* Sonnet xxxi. He signed the petition addressed to Leo X. by the Medicean Academy, entreating that Dante's remains might be brought to Florence, and offered to execute the monument of the "divine poet" without remuneration.

of the league of Cambray, and of the ruin of Venice, the last refuge of the cause of liberty in Italy; but Julius II., whilst crushing the venerable republic, was still enough at leisure to be impatient of the deliberation of Michael Angelo. "If you do not make more speed," he said, "I will have you hurled down from the scaffold."

On the 1st November, 1512, the Sistina was thrown open to the pontifical court. The cardinals, not having a conception of the meaning of the work, regarded it in solemn silence, while the old Pope murmured in a tone of displeasure "There is no gold about it." "Holy Father," replied the painter, "those whom I have represented up there were the poor of this world, and did not wear gold."

There was, indeed, in this composition of Michael Angelo, completed thirty years after by *The Last Judgment*, a hidden meaning quite impenetrable for the cultivated and somewhat pagan prelates of the Renaissance, who had wandered far indeed from primitive Christianity, and wholly lost sight of the religion of the Old Testament. They looked in vain for the quiet and touching mysticism of Masaccio, or Angelico, or Perugino, or the

deep pathos of Sodoma, or the radiant grace of Raphael. The Sistina furnished a majestic form of which they could not read a line.

Alone, in the flat, central portion of the arched roof, the creation of man is revealed to us in quiet majesty. We see the creature and the Creator, Adam and Jehovah. The first man, reclining on the earth over which he is to reign, rests on his elbow in the act of raising himself to meet, with out-stretched hand and arm and an air of conscious dignity, the Creator who approaches him, borne along by the angels that surround Him and enveloped in cloud-like drapery. With hand and arm extended the Creator touches him, as if to endow him with life and feeling, and to treat with him as man with man. But the compact thus entered into between Heaven and Humanity is soon broken, and the next scene shows us the first pair fleeing before the flaming sword of the archangel—the woman bowed down with shame, her face hidden between her hands; and the man, proud even in his despair, turning a glance of defiance on the executioner of Divine justice. Step by step, the whole lamentable drama of fallen humanity is unrolled before us, depicted along the

frieze and on the four walls of the chapel; the final act of it being portrayed above the altar, in the stupendous picture of *The Last Judgment.* In the lower portion of the ceiling are to be seen the colossal figures of the Prophets and Sibyls—the lights of the human race, the great souls who, among Gentiles, as well as among the chosen people, have been able to decipher, beneath the veil of futurity, the dread enigma whose final solution is God. The Sibyls are less terrible than the Prophets. According to ancient belief, they had been favoured with a vision of the Messiah, but to the Prophets only had been revealed the passion of Christ, and the future calamities of the world. The *Sibylla Lybica* rises with an air of transport, and raises her book towards heaven. The *Erythræa* is reading. Her bosom swells, and a half-smile plays on her face as she turns the sacred page, illumined by a little ministering angel who relights the extinguished lamp with his torch. Night is still brooding over the land of Ionia, the cradle of Grecian fable, while the daughter of Homer awaits the Coming One who is to bring in the full light of day. The Persian Sibyl, the oldest of the sisterhood—her head veiled after the Eastern

fashion, and her yellow mantle thrown back, holds the book close to her eyes, as if from dimness of sight, and meditates intently on the Asiatic Gospel of Zoroaster. The *Cumæan*, on the contrary, hardly daring to turn over the Sibylline leaves which she holds at a distance from her eyes, is occupied with the destiny of Rome; while the lovely young *Sybilla Delphica*, seated by her tripod, her hair waving in the breeze, allows the prophetic scroll in her hand almost to touch the ground, as she gazes into futurity, and seems to be hearing from afar the first sounds of the old gods departing and their temples falling.

But the Hebrew prophets set forth the woes to come with a far more portentous air. If *Zechariah*, clad in magnificent pontifical robes of gold and purple, is able to turn over the leaves of his book with an air of sacerdotal calm, *Jonah*, half bared as for conflict, seems to be declaiming in a sort of prophetic frenzy of menace and imprecation. If *Daniel*, with a fragment of lion's skin beside him, is able to employ himself in copying from the ponderous volume which one of the little genii supports with difficulty as it rests on the prophet's knees, *Isaiah* in an attitude of discouragement leans on the book which

he has closed, whilst with supplicating right hand extended towards heaven he turns a listening ear towards the heavenly voices. *Ezekiel*, robed in red, bounds forward, his turban in disorder, and his mantle blown about by a raging tempest—with one hand pointing to the ground he questions the angel at his side. Is he still seeing that valley of dry bones, once shown him in a vision, and is he about to ask once more, "Can these dry bones live?" But it is *Jeremiah* who seems to embody the idea of deepest desolation, as he sits cross-legged in his crimson robe, his elbow on his knee, his white beard sweeping his breast, and his head, heavy with its load of sorrow, resting on his hand. His mission is ended, and his lips closed, for he has survived the calamities he foretold, and there remains nothing for him to do, but to shed rivers of unavailing tears over the dispersion of his people and the destruction of Jerusalem.

In the recesses between the Prophets and Sibyls are a series of lovely family groups, representing the genealogy of the Virgin, and in the four corners of the ceiling other groups which illustrate the power of God as displayed in special deliverances of His chosen people.

All these victims of war and captivity, exile pestilence and famine, are depicted by the great master in a manner that shows his real tenderness of heart.* With what caressing touches his stoic pencil has portrayed these groups of frightened little ones clustering at their mother's knees—this sleeping mother clasping her infant in her protecting arms—that other, supporting her sick child's head upon her knee, while another little one nestles at her feet asleep on the bare ground, and there another runs for protection to the father, who looks back to see what peril has alarmed it. There are solitary exiles, too, begging as they go—here an old man with flowing beard, overcome with fatigue, sits by the wayside in his rags, leaning on his staff

* He retained, to the last, his child-like simplicity and kindness, and his constancy in friendship; and where he loved, he loved with all his soul. He was eighty-two years of age when he lost his faithful servant, Urbino, and wrote thus to Vasari. "My dear Messer Giorgio, I write with difficulty, but I wish to send some reply to your letter. You know how Urbino has died. It has been a great mercy from God to me, but at the same time a great grief and an infinite loss. The mercy has been that while his life has made me enjoy to live, his death makes me willing to die—even desirous of it. He has lived with me twenty-six years, as a valued and faithful servant, and now that I had made him rich, and was counting on him as the staff and stay of my old age, he has been taken from me, leaving me no other hope than that of meeting him in paradise. His death was a very beautiful one; he did not grieve to die, but only to leave me in this wicked world in the midst of so many trials. The best part of myself is gone with him, and nothing is left to me here below but overwhelming sorrow. I commend myself to you.

"Rome. At the end of August 1556."

—and there, a woman in a red cloak, with a beggar's wallet at her back, has her arms thrust forward and her head resting upon her knees.

A young man has fallen asleep, his arms hanging down listlessly, and a young girl sits in a dreamy attitude with the very expression and gesture of Jeremiah. The greater number seem to be benumbed by the misery in which they are steeped.

Beside the tranquil Zechariah an old man, with his arms and body swathed in yellow drapery, sits staring with wide-open eyes, while two grandchildren at his side gaze at something that alarms them—the younger venturing to look down timidly upon the pavement of the church, as into an abyss.

But not one of all these personages has had a glimpse of the scenes of *The Last Judgment.* Michael Angelo has not admitted among them either the Evangelists, who announced the resurrection of the dead, or the great poet of the Apocalypse; but when, with Charles the Fifth, Clement VII., and the last of the Medici, he had witnessed the agonies of Rome and Florence, he shut himself up again alone in the Sistine chapel, and depicted, on the wall facing the entrance,

the valley of Jehoshaphat on the resurrection day.

In the upper half of the picture we see Christ as Judge of the world—His gesture one of terrible vengeance, while below Him a cohort of angels is sounding the last trump which awakes the sleeping dead. On the right and left of the Son of God appear the saints and patriarchs, followed by the apostles and martyrs carrying the symbols of their sufferings—all witnessing with an air of extreme anxiety the decisions of eternal justice. As those who rise first approach the Judge to learn their doom, some of the blessed saints and angels assist them to rise to the regions of the blest—lifting by the shoulders, legs, or even the hair of the head —sometimes by the aid of a rosary—those who are intimidated by the formidable aspect of their Judge. Below them the dead are rising confusedly from their graves, some still clad in the garments they wore in the flesh, others vainly seeking to hide their nakedness in their graveclothes.

Here a despairing monk kneels with his hands joined in prayer; there, a skeleton raises his eyeless sockets pathetically towards heaven, while others regretting the lost

quiet of the grave would willingly sink to the earth again. But the last trump is still sounding—the graves have pitilessly cast out their tenants and already some on the left hand of the Judge have received their sentence. Avenging angels hurry off the lost souls, groaning and blaspheming, to the bottomless pit, hurling them down in one confused mass.

One poor wretch, carried off on the back of a demon, livid and mad with terror, screens his face with his hands, while another who is being hurled down head foremost crosses his arms in an attitude of supplication. These all have to be ferried over to the infernal shore, in the barque of Charon. The black boatman is at the stern and drives away the surging crowd with his oars. The demons on the opposite shore, with fiendish joy, seize the wretched passengers, who totter at the prow and, drawing back in horror, fall back pell-mell on the deck. One of them is stopping his ears that he may not hear the storm of unavailing cries that are addressed to the avenging Judge. In one of the condemned—locked in the embrace of a serpent—the contemporaries of Michael Angelo professed to recognise an obnoxious prelate of the

pontifical court ; but it does not appear that they also recognised among the blessed, wearing the robe of the Dominicans, the martyr of Florence, Girolamo Savonarola !

Michael Angelo had attained the age of seventy-six years. One can discern in the Last Judgment traces of the extreme effort of one striving to embody an inspiration that refuses to be expressed by painting, and the weariness of a great soul fatigued with life.

Twenty years before, at the time of the sack of Rome, the sculptor had left the tomb of the Medici unfinished, and never afterwards found courage to complete the figures of those marble giants, for which he had written the famous epigram :—

Grato m'è il sonno, e più l'esser di sasso ;
Mentre che il danno e la vergogna dura,
Non veder, non sentir, m'è gran ventura ;
Però non mi destar ; deh ! parlar basso !*

He had lived through the brilliant period of the Italian Renaissance, and was now witnessing its decline. He had seen Raphael die, and Correggio, Ariosto and Macchiavel ; Francis I. and Leo X. ; he had witnessed the subjugation of Italy, and the discomfiture

*To sleep is sweet, and best to sleep in stone,
While nothing here remains but shame and woe,
Not to perceive or feel—that, that alone
Is gain—ah ! do not wake me then—speak low.

of the Church, rent by the Reformation. He lived on thirteen years longer.

His day had been longer than that of his precursors, Dante and Savonarola ; but like them he had lived to feel himself useless and misunderstood, and experienced the bitter truth that in the struggle for justice the noblest souls are often doomed to feel themselves powerless to ameliorate the condition of humanity.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE FLORENTINE HISTORIANS OF THE RENAISSANCE, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

The Italian Renaissance effected a more profound and complete renovation among the nations of Western Europe than can be altogether accounted for by the influence of ancient art and literature, and the teaching of the Humanists and Platonists. The Romans, be it remembered, had received the Hellenic culture directly from the Greeks themselves; they had read the books which are lost to us for ever, and beheld the statues and paintings which our eyes will never see. Hellenic teaching had given them writers and poets, and yet between the Scipios and Antonines they can show nothing to compare with the Renaissance. They have added nothing to the teaching of their masters, either in art, science, or philosophy. The Byzantines again had long enjoyed the treasures of antiquity under the most sunny skies, but yet—although possessing clear and

subtle intellects—well-fitted for diplomacy, jurisprudence, and theology, just in proportion as time removed them from Greece, their historic literature became more arid and their political sense more meagre. Religious idealism also declined among them as well as art, until in the fifteenth century only a few convents on Mount Athos preserved the mere tradition of the mosaics and mystical paintings, that were so fine up to the time of Justinian and so mediocre in the last Byzantine works of Venice and Ravenna.

One other important fact must be borne in mind by the historian who seeks the causes of this great movement of the human mind, of which Italy was the cradle. The Greek influence which appeared plainly enough in the times of Petrarch and Boccaccio in the middle of the fourteenth century—and is still pretty evident to artists in the school of Nicholas of Pisa towards the end of the thirteenth—had been preceded in the Peninsula by the Arab influence, of which the reign of Frederick II. was the culminating period. This influence, although ephemeral, was very effective in Italy, less perhaps by the elegance it fostered in the arts of design and decoration and the passionate charm of

its poetry, than by the new views it opened out for the study of nature, in the schools of learning at Palermo, Amalfi and Salerno. By their physicians, botanists, and alchemists, the Arabs searched into the secrets of animal and vegetable life, according to an experimental method that has nothing in common with the scholastic science of the Middle Ages. By the aid of observation and analysis they were able more than once to reach the bottom of a reality where the syllogisms of the schools had hardly touched the surface. But the Arabs themselves had been, in a certain sense, the disciples of the Greeks, with whom the Aristotelian tradition connected them pretty closely. Now, if *they* form a distinct and peculiar group in the midst of the Middle Ages, like an earlier Renaissance, there are reasons to believe that it was a similar movement of mind and an analogous progress of method which detached Italy from the other nations of mediæval Europe and provoked the great Renaissance. The origin of this great movement would then be simply an evolution in human thought, a new and peculiar fashion of studying and conceiving of the world, of constructing science, of feeling and imagining beauty, of reasoning on the universe, and

concerning the soul and social polity. It is, accordingly, because Italy found again the spirit of analysis, of which the Arabs had given her the first example and which Greek culture developed and confirmed in her, that the civilization of modern nations felt itself born again, and rose superior to the sterile idealism and empty science which, having been established on an erroneous method, had only been able to advance cloudy ideas concerning man, and false or incomplete notions concerning nature. If then the vantage-ground of Greek genius was retaken by the Renaissance, it was that the men of that time entered into possession of the first instrument of all wisdom and science, which the Greeks had so marvellously fashioned—the dialectic faculty; which by the knowledge of the Real attains to the Ideal, and by reasoning on contingent verities rises to absolute truth. That which the philosopher, the politician, and the scholar call the absolute, or law, the artist and the poet call beauty. By the same travail of mind the former rises from the phenomenal to the absolute and connects visible and perishable things with their eternal law, and the latter passes from imperfect forms to the Ideal which they veil,

and transfigures the realities, which the senses recognise, by the supreme beauty which reason alone can contemplate. The theory of Socrates in his *Banquet* is also the justest theory of the Renaissance. The Italians then—renouncing all preconceived ideas in geography and the natural sciences, and all *a priori* axioms in morals and political science, all traditional mysticism in the arts, and all scholasticism in philosophy—came face to face with reality, analysed phenomena and facts, and, reasoning from the known to the unknown and from the particular to the general, determined some of the laws of nature and history, and ascertained the form of the world and certain laws of criticism of the antique: by perspective and anatomy, by studying the movements and attitudes of the body and the most delicate and fleeting emotions of the soul, and at last by colour, they reproduced living beauty in their works of sculpture and painting. The direction and march of thought have been the same in Christopher Columbus and Machiavelli, in Marsilio Ficino and Masaccio, in Aldo Manutio and Galileo, in Donatello and Leonardo da Vinci, Ariosto and Titian, Michael Angelo and Raphael. The univer-

sality and excellence of one single method of the mind explain the harmony and productiveness of the Renaissance. This also accounts for the astonishing diversity of aptitudes which were the gift of some of the Italians of this epoch, who were artists in many arts,—at once men of letters and poets, humourists and philosophers, engineers, naturalists and musicians:—Leo Battista Alberti, Pico della Mirandola, Brumelleschi, Leonardo, *Michael Angelo*,* Raphael and Cellini. One just method prepares a disciplined intelligence for all the objects to which it may apply itself; as a knowledge of the organic laws of a family of languages prepares for the knowledge of all the languages of that family.

Of all the intellectual works of the period there are none which bear the impress of the Renaissance to the same extent as those on History and Diplomacy. The historians and diplomatists of Venice and Florence have surpassed, in originality and vigour of thought, the writers on all other subjects;—the heroic poets, who revived with some scepticism the legends of Northern medi-

* He was accustomed to sign himself "Michael, poet, painter, sculptor, and architect."

ævalism, as well as the philosophers who annotated Plato and imitated Plotinus, and the dramatic writers who kept reproducing the complicated intrigues of Terence, or the equivocal situations of Plautus. The historical writings appear something altogether exceptional in the Italian literature of the period intervening between the death of Petrarch and the Council of Trent. Philip de Commines is, for the France of that day, a really political historian and a distinguished writer; but how petty and trivial he appears compared with Machiavelli and Guicciardini! In spite of all his natural shrewdness and actual experience of life, he is evidently incapable of formulating a philosophy of history; his general views on France do not come near to the *Ritratti di Francia* of Machiavelli, and his wisdom is nothing but empiricism. Florence and Venice, whose schools of art evince a vivid conception of real life, movement, and colour, have, in like manner, trained men able to observe and judge that great human reality, History—to unravel the really important threads from the confused and complicated web of facts, and to penetrate under the surface of political passions down to the underlying currents of private

interests, which, though little apparent at first sight in the outward course of events, are, none the less, the moving inner springs of history. In this department too, as well as in that of painting, Florence surpassed Venice; thanks to the nature of her government which, being more democratic and oftener swayed by popular caprice, furnished a richer field for observation. The Florentine statesmen and historians of the Renaissance, being frequently called upon to inquire into the causes of prosperity or revolution in their republic, discerned more and more clearly the important part played by economic facts. They thus grasped the connection existing between the healthy or unhealthy political condition of their country and its public and private wealth, the development of its commerce and industry, and the nature and assessment of its taxes. They proved by experience, in certain very complex crises, the common peril incurred at the same time by liberty and property. They thus introduced into history a new notion, and as it were a new habit of mind, testifying to the intrinsic value of their criticism better even than the imitation of the oratorical manner of Sallust and Livy. They were—unknown

to themselves doubtless, and after Aristotle —the founders of what is now an independent science, but which will in the future be one of the first elements of a definite philosophy of history.

The starting-point for any inquiry into the relation between the economy of a state and its politics, is evidently a collection of very precise facts—statistics on which analysis and reasoning can be exerted. Venice, early attentive to the state of her commerce, understood, earlier than the other cities of Italy, the value of an exact observation of the facts bearing upon riches. Her travellers, statesmen, and chroniclers, all drew up statistics. The first of these economists in point of time, Marco Polo, is certainly not the least sagacious and instructive. In the middle of the thirteenth century, traversing the vast territories of Genghis-Khan, or visiting the court of his successor—face to face with Islamism, Buddhism, and the old paganisms of Asia—this extraordinary man, on his guard against prejudice and superstition, methodically notes all the curious phenomena of nature and humanity; territorial divisions and geographical features, the course of navigable rivers, the productions of the soil and the industrial

methods of utilizing them, the permanent and floating population of the towns, the strange customs, the state of agriculture, commerce and industry, the flocks and herds, the manufactures of silk, cotton, leather and porcelain; the produce of salt works and iron mines, the raising and perfecting of petroleum, the employment of canals for the transport of rice, the export and import traffic at the ports, the direction of the great highways and crossways, the highway robberies and the hostelries, the couriers, taxes and paper-money; the fixed currency, the storing of provisions against times of scarcity, the methods of legislation and the execution of justice. He points out the principal sources of taxation, the duty on merchandise of all kinds, on precious stones, salt, sugar, coal and silks; the nature and value of the coinage, the texture of the paper-money and its successive issues in the reign of Kubla-Khan, with the amount of gold, silver, precious stones and furs, which correspond to it, laid up in the treasury of the Great Mogul. No doubt Marco Polo consulted the official documents of the financial administration of the Empire, as M. Pauthier the learned editor of his book suggests, and that

this marvellous traveller, by his counsels and experience, confirmed his fellow-countrymen in their aptitude for commerce.

Tommaso Mocenigo, a doge of Venice in the early part of the fifteenth century, made a digest of the budgets of the republic, to aid the Grand Council in its deliberations on the offer made by Florence for an offensive alliance against Milan. One of the orators, Ser Francesco Foscari, demonstrated by figures that it was to the interest of Venice not to embroil herself with neighbours who brought into her exchequer 900,000 ducats a year, or from 17,000 to 18,000 ducats a week. The trade of Venice with Monza was worth 1,000 ducats a week, with Como 2,000, with Alessandria 1,000, with Tortona and Novara 2,000, with Pavia, Cremona, Parma, and Piacenza 2,000. Venice exported into Lombardy 5,000 *miles* of cotton for 250,000 ducats, 120,000 ducats' worth of wool at 60 ducats *the mile*, 250,000 ducats' worth of silken and gold stuffs, 300,000 ducats' worth of pepper at 100 ducats the load, 250,000 ducats' worth of soap, 3,000 ducats' worth of slaves. The freight of the galleys, which traded with Syria, the Grecian Empire, Catalonia, Flanders, Cyprus and

Sicily, was worth 600,000 ducats. War would cause at the same time devastation of territory and depreciation of merchandise. Ought we ourselves to ravage our fertile domain? "*E questo un giardino da doversi disfare?*"

Mocenigo recalled on his death-bed, as the economic result of his government, four millions of ducats paid off that had been borrowed for past wars, and the public treasury worth six millions. The capital employed on foreign commerce amounted to ten millions of ducats a year. Venice possessed 3,000 small vessels with 17,000 marines, 300 medium vessels with 8,000 marines, 45 galleys with equipment of 11,000 men. Houses worth ten millions of ducats brought in 500,000. A thousand gentlemen had an income of from 70 to 4,000 ducats. The Zecca minted every year one million gold ducats, 200,000 silver pieces, and 600,000 *soldi*. The trade with Florence brought in 392,000 ducats a year. The Florentine stuffs,* stored at Venice, were sold in Apulia, Sicily, Barbary, Syria, Cyprus, Rhodes, Egypt, Greece, Candia, and Istria. The

* Boniface VIII. remarked in 1300 that the Florentines were a fifth element in the world!

dying man entreated his colleagues in the government to perpetuate his prudent measures. "You will become," he said, "masters of all the gold in Christendom, and the whole world will stand in awe of you."*

Marino Samudo gives detailed statistics of the foreign commerce, and the income accruing from it to the State, for the year 1423—a most unproductive year elsewhere, on account of the wars which were ravaging Europe. The chronicler appends the table of receipts and expenditure for each of the Italian provinces of the republic, in which the former far exceed the latter. Padua and the Padovan brought in 65,500 ducats, and only cost 14,000. He ends with a statement of the amount raised by taxes: 165,000 ducats on salt, 25,000 on the manorial property in the *dogato*, 5,000 on the possessions out of Italy, 22,000 on the incomes of the clergy, 16,000 on the customs, 1,100 on the Jews. The State lost 6,000 ducats on the houses inhabited by the poor.

Samudo wrote at the beginning of the sixteenth century. His information is abundant, but the political and moral conclusions he

* Muratori xxii., 942. See also in Vasari's Life of Sansovino the income derived from houses belonging to the State

draws from it are of the most commonplace, and do not go beyond the exhortations of Tommaso Mocenigo: *Ne tempi di guerra gl'affari languiscono.* "In times of war business is at a standstill." The smallest tradesman in Venice knew as much on this point as his doge. The Florentine, Giovanni Villani, nearly two hundred years before Samudo, had already derived more lofty views and a more precise morality from the observation of economic facts, and if we contrast the Venetian chronicler with his Florentine contemporaries, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, we see clearly what an amount of philosophy it needs to rise from statistics to history.

At the outset of historical literature in Florence, we meet with a notion, in the chronicle of Dino Compagni, which, though at first of special application and limited to a single event, is destined to become more and more general in its bearings until it becomes at last one of the most absorbing ideas with Tuscan statesmen and historians. The Neri, who at the commencement of the fourteenth century were the masters of the republic, were divided into the party of the *burgesses* (*popolani grossi*) and the democratic party,

headed by Corso Donati. With the view of overturning the institution of the *Priori*,* he excited the people by the enumeration of their excessive burdens. "The poor," he said, "are harassed and robbed by taxes and duties (*libbre*) by which some others fill their purses. Let us see what becomes of all this money, for it cannot all be expended on war." These questions he kept agitating with much importunity before the Signori, and in the general councils. But Dino Compagni concludes that Rosso della Tosa by favouring the burgesses, and Donati by attaching himself to the humbler people *(popolo minuto)*, were each striving to create, for personal ends, separate and independent interests, after the manner of the Seignories of Lombardy. He perceives that the rivalries of class, which were at the bottom of all the internal dissensions of Florence, were often caused by a partial or unjust assessment of taxes.

Giovanni and Matteo Villani draw up statistics, calculate the resources of the State and estimate the private fortunes of individuals with an admirable facility. One feels

* Successors to the *Anziani*, for whom they were substituted in 1282.

them to be kindred spirits with the powerful banking families who were then enriching Florence, and would in due time govern it. But it strikes us with something like astonishment that they should be contemporary with Dante—of whom Giovanni indeed says, "This man has not the mind of a layman! *Non bene sapeva conversare co'laici.*" Certainly if the brothers Villani, with their clear business heads, represent their countrymen and the spirit of their times, Dante, with his lofty and morbid mysticism, is an apparition from a bygone age. While he is magnificently lamenting the treason of the papacy and the desolation of Rome deserted by her pontiff, Giovanni Villani is stating that the treasury of John XXII., when he died at Avignon, contained eighteen millions in golden florins, and crowns, mitres, and jewels to the value of seven millions; and he and his brother are enlightening us concerning the ingenious method by which the popes acquire a right to the first year's revenue of the new bishops. "Instead of filling the vacant see," he says, "by the nomination of a simple priest, they appoint the bishop of another diocese, and thus, by the promotion of several pre-

lates, multiply vacancies and increase their revenue."

Giovanni has preserved for us the budget of Florence for the year 1343. The total receipts amount to 604,850 golden florins, the ordinary expenditure to 67,750. But the excess was regularly consumed by war expenses. The war with Lombardy cost 600,000 florins in two years.

The following are the most interesting items in the table of receipts :—

	Florins.
Octroi (city toll) at the exit and entry of eatables	90,200
On the third of the retail value of wines ...	58,300
On salt—at 40 soldi the bushel for the citizens and 20 soldi the bushel for the peasants ...	14,450
Registration of contracts	11,000
Flour and grist tax	4,250
On rents	idem
On shambles in the town	15,000
On cattle-markets in the town	2,150
On balconies in Florence	5,550
Tax of the Signori, that is to say, on citizens having appointments abroad	3,500
Hucksters and fruiterers	450
Dispensations from military service	7,000
Authorisations to carry arms, at 20 soldi a head	1,300
Taxes on citizens living in the country, on country houses, mills, and fishing, about ...	300,000

A large proportion of these taxes are duties on consumption. We will notice under the head of expenditure.

	Florins.
Salary of the Podestà and his family	15,250
Salary of the Minister of Public Justice against the nobles	4,900
Salary of the custodian of the people, overseer of exiles from Florence, with 50 horse and 100 foot soldiers	26,000
Table of the *priori* * and their families in the palace	3,600
Feed of the lions, and lighting and warming the palace	2,400
Six hundred guards on night watch	10,800
Spies and messengers	1,200
Ambassadors	15,000
Salary of the magistrate for restraining the luxury of women	1,000

In consequence of the war with Lucca, in 1345, the public debt—the *Monte* †—amounted to 504,000 golden florins. Matteo Villani tells us how it was organized. Every month each creditor handled an interest of a penny in the pound, and was at liberty to sell out at pleasure. ‡

* Gratuitous table provided for the *priori* during their two months' sovereignty.

† Villani, xi., 91. *Monte commune, i.e.*, funded debt office.—Tr.

‡ Muratori iii., 106. See also the learned work of M. Eug. Benoist *Guicciardini Histor. et Homme d'Etat.*

The elder Villani by no means confines himself to a table of receipts and expenditure. He cites and appraises every element of material and intellectual wealth in Florence; describes its topography, gives an exact measure of its walls, and estimates its military resources. It contained 25,000 men, between the ages of 15 and 70 years, of whom 1,500 were nobles fit to carry arms, and 65 mounted cavaliers.

Formerly, before the rise of democracy, these last amounted to more than 250; now, the nobles, withdrawn from power, neglect the profession of arms. The town contained, besides the convents, 90,000 inhabitants, and a floating population of 1,500, including foreigners; the country round Florence, 80,000. Every year there was an average of 5,800 births—*from 300 to 500 more boys than girls.* From 8,000 to 10,000 children of both sexes knew how to read; from 1,000 to 1,200 were learning arithmetic in six schools; from 540 to 600 were studying grammar and logic in four great schools. Florence possessed 110 churches, of which 57 were parish churches, five abbeys, 24 nunneries, 10 monasteries, with more than 7,000 monks: and 30 hospitals, with more than 1,000 beds

for the poor and infirm. The *craft of wool** occupied 200 workshops, and produced from 70,000 to 80,000 pieces of stuff, worth more than 1,200,000 golden florins. More than 30,000 persons were employed in it. Thirty years previously its workshops had amounted to the number of 300, but the workmanship was not so fine. Public and private luxury had made great strides in the last century. A foreigner at the outskirts of the city would think he was approaching Rome. Villani thus rises, by the analysis of economic data, to the higher notion of civilisation. In the same way a Florentine writer of the fifteenth century, Ceretano, brings together on the same page the seventy-two money-changers' shops which surrounded the *Mercato Nuovo* in 1422, and their two millions of golden florins in circulation, the recent industry in gold thread, that of silk, the monuments of Brunelleschi, the literary awakening inaugurated by the

* Arte di lana. All the trades and crafts of Florence were enrolled into corporations, in one or other of which it was necessary for every citizen, gentle or simple, to matriculate. These guilds, 21 in number, were divided into major and minor, according to their dignity or importance. There were seven major and fourteen minor corporations, each having its own hall or residence, represented in the great council. Every young Florentine had to "*andare per la maggiore*" or minore, as the phrase went—literally, *go in* for a major or a minor. The art of weaving wool flourished to such an extent that a duty of two florins each piece of cloth woven sufficed to build the sumptuous church of Santa Maria del Fiore.—Tr.

humanist Leonardo Aretino, Secretary of the republic, and the peace which Florence and Italy were then enjoying. Villani has full consciousness of both the wealth and importance of his city. "I wish," he says, "to leave to posterity a record of the wealth of the State and the causes that have produced it, so that, in future, prudent citizens may have a starting-point from which to add to the prosperity of Florence."

However, the picture has its shadows, and Villani has not concealed them. In a city where power belonged generally, not to the aristocracy of birth, but to the rich members of the *bourgeoisie*, an overweening desire for wealth exposed the private fortunes of citizens, as well as the public credit, to perilous risks. Through her great bankers, Florence lent at high interest, to all the princes of Christendom. The King of England, who was the largest borrower, ruined by war with France, and refusing to fulfil his engagements, in 1338 caused the fall of the house of Perruzzi, to which he was owing 1,365,000 golden florins, and in 1345 that of the house of Bardi, his creditors for 900,000. Giovanni Villani sets forth the terrible reverses which these two failures

brought upon the republic; the bankers,* great and small, the Accajuoli, the Buonacorsi, the Corsini, even the merchants, suspended payment; industry was at a standstill, merchandise of all kinds was depreciated, the foreign commerce of Florence, which depended upon the dealings on exchange, was compromised for many a long year. Usury got worse and worse, and consequently the difficulties of borrowers increased also. The Bardi gave their creditors ninepence three-farthings in the pound. The historian launches out into vehement invective against the avarice of the low, and of the corruption of the great whose example influences the multitude, while their greedy and despotic rule destroys the prosperity and dignity of the State.

We observe in the budget of Florence, according to Villani, that nearly all the imposts were taxes on consumption, or such as weighed heavily on the most humble industries, while large properties and great commercial transactions went almost unburdened. The political and social inconvenience of this unequal distribution, of

* There were 80 banks in Florence in the sixteenth century.—Tr.

which Machiavelli was fully conscious, does not escape the notice of Giovanni. He concludes his table of receipts with these words, "Signori of Florence! what an error you commit when you increase the revenue by excessive duties—impoverishing the cities for the sake of carrying on rash and foolish enterprises! Are you not aware that when the sea runs high, the greater is the tempest, and that when the revenue is augmented injurious expenditure increases in proportion?" The hardships of the working classes, their demands and requirements, the resistance of the privileged classes, and the threats of the Florentine demagogues, all appear in the chronicle of the old historian. Two efforts are made, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, to impose a tax upon the clergy, of first 20,000, and then 12,000 golden florins. On the first occasion the Pope had authorized the tax. But "it is impossible to collect half of it," he says, "without great scandal." In 1327 the clergy put Florence under an interdict, and closed the churches. The same year an attempt was made to regulate the property and income of the citizens, and to establish a tax on income and on commercial gains (*gua-*

dagni). But the corrupt controllers made incorrect returns, sometimes insufficient, sometimes exaggerated, and the treasury only received 80,000 florins. Some years later the arbitrary government of the Duke of Athens placed the question of the reform of taxation among the first political necessities of Florence. Villani, with great good sense, sees the connection of the economic crisis, with the nature of the government and the fall of liberty. "*Sconfitte*," he says, "*vergogna d'imprese, perdimenti di sustanza, di moneta e fallimenti di mercatanzia, e danni di credenza, e ultimamente di libertà recati a tirannica Signoria e servaggio.*"*

In 1378 the popular insurrection broke out which for the moment put the power into the hands of the wool-carder, Michael Lando. Gino di Neri Capponi laid before Machiavelli the popular demonstration presented by the weavers and dyers, in which they demand, first, the privilege of being independent of the wool-combers' guild (*l'arte della lana*) and subject to the authority of their own consuls only; and, secondly, that the public debt, regardless of all claims for the payment of interest, shall be paid off in twelve years,

* Lib. 12, 875.

by lot.* Lastly, that for two years no debtor should be sued for any debt amounting to less than 50 florins. By way of giving force to their requests, they burned a few palaces and the records of the guild (*arte*) of wool; then they hanged a magistrate and tore him in pieces!

The sovereignty of the first of the Medici restored internal harmony to Florence, and with it a revival of commerce and of the arts of civilization. The writers of the period and the documents collected by Fabroni continue the tradition of Villani in the matter of statistics. We learn that between the years 1434 and 1471 the heads of the republic dispensed 663,755 golden florins in alms and buildings; the share of Cosmo the Great in this expenditure exceeds 400,000 florins. The picture of Florentine industry, drawn by Benedetto Dei, shows us the great progress made in elegance and taste, and in all the arts of luxury; the damask stuffs, brocaded in gold and silver, the carved and inlaid woods and sculptured marbles, the mosaics and jewellery. However, under this brilliant outside there lurked a commercial uneasiness, and a social danger, whose first

* Muratori, xviii., page 1,119.

symptoms are revealed to us by Dino Compagni, and which were already disquieting the patriotic soul of Villani. A thorough reform of the system of taxation was alike demanded by the people, and desired by all reflecting minds. A very curious document, the project for *the assessment of the tenth* (*decima*), committed to writing by Ludovico Ghetti in the second half of the fifteenth century, puts us *au courant* with the problem which, still further complicated by new revolutions, was destined to absorb the attention of the great historians of the sixteenth century.* "In order," says Ghetti, in his preamble, "to stop the complaints and accusations which furnish a pretext for the Condottieri (hired captains) and tyrants of Italy to make war upon Florence in hopes of support from an embittered population driven to revolt by exorbitant taxes (*sperando di fare ribelliuni negli aggravati popoli*), it behoves us to levy a bearable tax, which can be shared by all the citizens, without arousing anger or discontent in any (*acciochè ciascuno partecipi generalmente alla gravezza*). This equitable tax is to be that of the tenth (*decima*) to which all classes of Florentine citizens, and

* Roscoe's "Life of Lorenzo de Medici," vol. i.; append. xvi.

all forms of industry shall be subject—manufactures and commerce, property and income, ecclesiastics and laymen, absentees and foreigners—because all who enjoy the blessings, arising from order and justice in the State, ought to share in the cost of them. The industries of the seven *arti majori* (large guilds or crafts) shall pay on their profits, on such salaries of their clerks as are above fifty florins, on the sums invested at the *monte*, and on the rents of houses, mills, and shops. The tax shall also be levied on the expenses of magistrates, and the salaries of public officers. The industries of the fourteen minor arts (*arti minori*) shall pay on their profits, but not on the salaries of their workmen or any that labour with their hands (*quasi sono tutte povere persone*), but it shall be levied on butchers' meat, fruit, vegetables, wine, oil, corn, flax, sulphur, fuel—in short all the natural and cultivated products of the soil." Ghetti estimates in figures the probable product of each source of income, and calculates the total at 475,815 golden florins. This economist, who, doubtless, was only the echo of his time, after having enumerated the just idea of the equality of all with regard to taxation, contradicts it immediately

by the immunity which he claims for the working classes. The very precise notion expressed in his project of a uniform system of taxes, which, instead of being arbitrary and changing, as under the Medici, should ultimately be resolved into one simple fixed sum paid annually as income-tax, was very soon perverted by the advance of the demagogic spirit, together with the crises of the latter years of the fifteenth century, and the dangers and necessities of the earlier years of the sixteenth century.

On the 5th of February, 1495, Savonarola being the virtual ruler of Florence, the Grand Council decreed the reform of taxation, according to the advice of the Dominican of San Marco. Fixed taxation, up to that time ill understood in Italy, was created; forced loans and arbitrary taxes were suppressed. "It was decided," says Nardi, "that taxes should be levied in future on the incomes arising from fixed property, and that ten per cent. from these incomes should be paid to the Commune, without any other taxation whatever." * At the same time, acts of indemnity were passed in favour of debtors whose taxes were in arrears, and

* Storia di Firenze, lib. ii.

those condemned for debt or default. Controllers were appointed to value all estates and set aside *the tenth*, the first returns being made for the years from 1494 to 1498. It was not possible to touch the estates of the Church until 1516.* Rightly to appreciate this tax—apparently so equitable and well-proportioned, but which weighed solely on property—we must bear in mind the moral and political state of Florence when it became law. The republic—delivered up to the theocratic demagogy of Savonarola, oscillating between a tyranny of the people and a dangerous oligarchy—saw the covetousness of 1378 repeated in a theoretic and legal form. ("*Sotto nome di governo popolare*," says Guicciardini, "*tendeva in molte parti più alla potenza di pochi che a partecipazione universale.*" †) Savonarola preached against the rich, and the *popolo grasso*. "*Pasce fame morientem, si non pasceris, occidisti.*" According to him it was a mortal sin to have any superfluity. "The poor do all the work, while the princes and lords handle their wages. They fatten on the taxes and revenue, and neglect to perform the duties of their position. They think only of feasting and

* V. Pagnini. *Sulla decima.* † *Storia d'Italia*, lib. ii.

sensual delights. It is the same with the bishops, the prelates, and the beneficed clergy: *in labore hominum non sunt.* For them no labour. . . . They are enjoying their estates, while their subjects work all day for a subsistence, and then die of hunger." (*Sono ricchi in fondi, e godono, e li sudditi loro si muoiono di fame.*) Another day he descanted on the saying of St. Ambrose: "*Superfluum quod tenes, tu furaris,*" (superfluity belongs to the poor, to enjoy it yourself is a robbery). Charity was thus becoming a civic duty. Savonarola was anxious to organize it by the institution of a *Mont-de-Piété*, that is to say, by a bank of almost gratuitous loans, in imitation of those which the blessed Bernardino da Feltro had founded in Lombardy on the model of the *Monte* at Perugia, and which were called *Monti de'Lombardi.* "I recommend to your support the *Monti di Pietà,*" said he to his hearers. "Let every one contribute to them. Women, above all, should give over to them their superfluities. Let each bring his offering, and let it not consist of quattrini, but of ducats." The law was promulgated on the 28th of December, 1495. It condemned "the abyss into which usury had plunged

Florence for the last sixty years by the hands of the Jews." According to Migliore,* the Jews who lent at compound interest, and drew 32½ per cent. for their money, made a hundred florins produce in fifty years 49,792,556 florins, seven soldi, and seven quattrini. The law, therefore, gave the Jews one year in which to depart from the territory of the republic, a measure that would have been fatal to Florentine commerce if it had been rigorously executed. On the 15th of April, 1496, the two Councils ratified the statutes of the new institution. The expenses of administration were limited to six hundred florins a year; the interest on loans, which Savonarola would have had absolutely gratuitous, might not exceed six per cent. The funds came in so abundantly that two new *Monti di Pietà* might very well have been opened.†

Savonarola had declared war against riches. The general tax on incomes, suggested by Ghetti, and the proportional tax of the tenth on fixed incomes, recommended by the former, began to be transformed into a progressive tax on fixed property, supplemented moreover by the *graciozi* and the

* *Firenze illustrata.* † Twenty-first sermon on Amos.

dispiacente invented under Cosmo in 1442,* and made use of also by Lorenzo the Magnificent.† Here we encounter the precise information and politic judgments of Guicciardini. At the commencement of the invasions of Louis XII., Florence, exhausted by war with Pisa, harassed by the fall of Milan and the policy of Alexander VI., and threatened in her independence by the policy of the Duke de Valentinois, looked about for the means of raising her finances.‡ "Since '94," says Guicciardini, "the tax of a tenth had been levied on the property of all seculars, *renewing it, according to circumstances, two or three times in a year;* but this tax producing too little, the inventors of fresh burdens decided on a progressive additional tax of five ducats, to be levied on those whose payment of the tenth exceeded five ducats, and ordained that it should be raised on an ascending scale on every additional five ducats. Thus the man who possessed fifty ducats of income only paid five ducats into the exchequer, while he who possessed three hundred gave eighty or a hundred, so that while the former only paid a tenth, the

* *Vide* Aquarone and Villari. Savonarola, 1195 and 1196.
† Parenti. *Storia di Firenze.*
‡ Passerini. *Storia di Stabilim: di beneficenza in Firenze.*

latter was mulcted of the fourth or the third, and this was called the progressive tenth (*decima scalata*). *As the tax might be levied two or three times in the year*, the proprietor of fifty ducats of income paid a quarter or a third of it; at three hundred ducats the whole income was given up, and, the progressive payment continuing, for five hundred or six hundred ducats he would pay the whole income of his property once and a half or twice over during the year. In spite of its injustice and the damage it caused to the public weal—it being obviously to the interest of the city to maintain the wealth of its citizens—this tax was in great favour, especially among the poor, who preferred greatly a law by which they hardly suffered at all, and it was also naturally acceptable to those whose wealth consisted of cash, since it hardly touched them either. Those only remained to be considered who had considerable estates in houses and lands, and they were few in number." The progressive tenth was therefore again proposed in Council, and ardently supported by Luigi Scarlatti. He urged "that it was reasonable for every man to bear the burdens of the State in proportion to his fortune, adding that those who complained

of being ruined by the tax had nothing to do but reduce their expenses; if they could no longer keep horses and servants let them imitate him, who for his part always went into the country on foot, and waited on himself habitually. The tax was therefore decreed, much to the discredit of the Signoria in the estimation of upright people; all the more that when the same proposition had been made in the preceding Signoria, Giovan Battista Ridolfi, who though a Gonfalonier was not a wealthy proprietor, had always firmly resisted it, and in his time it had never been adopted." * The burning words of Savonarola had thus borne their fruit. "Oh, my God," he had said, "the rich oppress the poor, and the powerful tear Thy people in pieces, and the perverse persecute the just without pity. Thy faithful ones have no fathers or defenders." †

This ardent and persistent soul had never perceived all the bearings of his scheme. In aiming a blow at riches he was striking at the material prosperity of the whole city of Florence, which, destitute of an effective standing army, had only made its position in

* *Storia Fiorentina op. ined.*, tom. iii., cap. xxi., p. 221.
† Commentary on the Psalm *Qui regis Israel.*

Tuscany and Italy by means of its financial resources. It was the great money market of Europe, and the leading industrial town. It took the raw materials of the different countries of Europe—their wool for instance —and distributed them again as manufactured articles. Florence had been incessantly harassed by its neighbours—Pisa, Bologna, Arezzo, Pistoia—and often beaten by them ; but it was rich, and therefore always rose after defeat ; it could always buy itself out of the grasp of its rivals, and buy them also at last. Its banking and its industries—that is to say its *bourgeoisie*—constituted its strength.

The first condition of this prosperity was liberty. Florentine historians, such as Donato Velluti, are well aware of this. Liberty fell under the attacks of demagogues and of the Medici ; *émeutes* and *coups d'état*, disorder in the workshop and the street, confiscation and corruption, hastened the political ruin and the economic decline of Florence. But Savonarola hurried on the crisis. The distress of mind evinced by Machiavelli, as he vainly seeks a durable form of government for his country, betrays the irreparable fall, which was in part his own work.

Guicciardini clearly shows in the course of his history of Florence, the close connection existing between this critical state of the public finances, the uncertainty of internal order, and the violence or incapacity of the Government. The same problem always presents itself to inferior statesmen thrust into power by the popular voice. How to fill the empty coffers of the republic.* Now, the Gonfalonier of Public Justice, Ridolfi, proposes to the Grand Council a partial bankruptcy of the *Monte*, a reduction or suspension of the payment of interest; now, it is airily suggested to pay off the debts of the Commune in six years,† an operation which circumstances were sure to render impossible; one day an alliance concluded with Louis XII. gives an upward tendency to the public funds ‡ on the next, the Government finds itself face to face with the dangerous realities of its external policy and internal embarrassment, with "the disorders common to the great assemblies," says Guicciardini, "long and tardy deliberations, and state secrets divulged; with no light on the direction and tendency of Italian affairs; adversity took us by sur-

* Chapter xxi., 219. † Chapter xxiii., 250.
‡ Chapter xxiv, 255.

prise, the princes of neighbouring states had no friendship or good understanding with us, for want of men whom they could trust; finances, passing through many hands and negligently administered, were scattered almost before they were gathered. Money was thrown away uselessly and too late. What might have been done at first for 100 ducats, could not be done afterwards for 100,000. Hence enormous taxes were constantly being levied which crushed those put under contribution—the Signoria, incessantly short of money, would levy forced loans upon the richest citizens—a resource that became exhausted at last; and this after obliging us to neglect everything else, even the support of sufficient troops to defend the territory and man the fortresses."

Pursuing this melancholy review of calamities succeeding one another by an inevitable law, the historian gives us a picture of "the most honest and enlightened citizens turning their backs upon public affairs and embassies; the State delivered over to the vulgar ambition of adventurers; tyranny, licence and negligence, disgracing every department of the administration; Florence despised by her subjects and suspected by

the princes of Italy, with her commercial credit dishonoured, galloping to ruin at a hundred miles an hour" (*vedevano la città ruinare, e andarne all Giù, cento miglia per ora*). The governing classes—the *haute bourgeoisie*—removed from power were become the object of the people's hatred and daily in danger of being plundered; the republicans, enemies of the Medici, were in fear lest this excess of disorder might bring them back to power; finally, the wealthy, irritated at being incessantly arbitrarily imposed upon for the finances of the Council, longed for an administration, under any government, that would only save them from being utterly ruined.

The common people themselves, wearied with the taxes which continued to be levied as before, rendered uneasy by the threatened suspension of the payments of the *Monte*, and made restless by the revolt of Arezzo, saw at last pretty clearly "that the city unless it speedily got under a better system was marching to its ruin. They therefore consented to a reform, on condition that it should not be aristocratic, and that the Grand Council should be retained." It was decided to elect a Gonfalonier for life, and the choice

rested on Piero Soderini.* He was "a man," says Guicciardini, "who regulated his private life with the strictest economy, although he was very rich and without children."

He restored order to the finances and the *monte*, diminished the expenditure as soon as he was relieved of the presence of Alexander VI. and the Duke de Valentinois, and finally lowered the taxes considerably. His government, which saved Florence from bankruptcy, was long popular (*era lodato universalmente il suo governo*).† In 1506 he made the Council of Eighty pass a measure for an extraordinary tax on incomes of two tenths and a half, and a forced loan at the same rate, in spite of a strong majority who would have preferred an increased duty on salt; but the Grand Council and the new Signoria rejected the measure. The Gonfalonier was like one possessed (*eravi il Gonfaloniere su indiavolato*). They told him it was not right to come down upon the people too much! ("*non essere giusto volere cozzare col popolo*"). Some time after they contented themselves with an additional tax of a single tenth and a forced loan to the same amount,

* Chapter xxv., passim. † Chapter xxviii., 312.

to which was added an eighth on the customs' duties.*

The unpublished works of Guicciardini now brought out by Canestrini, show how much philosophy and experience the historian had gathered from the social and economic crises he had witnessed. In the course of his legation to Emilia, in 1516, he informs Lorenzo de'Medici of the state of the taxes, particularly of that upon salt, and the measures he had taken to bring it back to the former rate, without causing too much irritation or converting it into a poll-tax; he tells him of the contributions levied by the Signori to the detriment of the public treasury; of the useless offices which it was desirable to abolish for the sake of economy; and of the tax for the maintenance of the soldiers, which he was seeking to re-establish.†

In 1524, as President of La Romagna, he regulates, at the court of Rome, the duties which the Venetians shall pay to the Chancellor for the corn they export from that province.‡ In 1532, during his legation to Bologna, he occupies himself in regulating

* Chapter xxix., 3 8, 329.
† Op. ined., t. vii., lett. iv. and x.
‡ T. viii., p. 76, 85, 98, 159, 182.

the hearth-tax, and subjected the clergy to it.* Finally, in his *Scritti Varj*, and his great political works *On the Government of Florence*, and *On the changes and reforms in the Government*, he resumes and discusses in full, the economic problems, whose singular importance he had already pointed out in his *Storia Fiorentina*.

According to Guicciardini, arbitrary taxation, not previously determined by law, had been for the Medici at the same time a weapon and a means of corruption. He would excuse them if they had never held this rod in their hands, excepting against suspected persons or known enemies of the State. But they made use of it as an instrument of terror to bring over to their party the *bourgeoisie* of Florence, and all those who preferred commerce to public business. By this means they made themselves absolute masters, strengthening themselves by the cowardice of the *bourgeoisie* and the favour of the popular party, to whom they threw open the first offices of the State, clothing them with the scarlet of the old nobility.† The *arbitrio*, a forced loan on commerce and credit, which they abused for

* T. ix., p. 242. † Reggim. di Firenze, lib. i.

the purpose of filling their exchequer, struck a mortal blow at the industries of Tuscany. "Everybody was anxious and astonished, and the city always in a state of alarm, lost all its business activity." It waxed poorer and weaker, and at the same time weakened and impoverished the Government; for "the strength of the head of a state is in proportion to the strength of his subjects. . . . If then he desires to attach the people closely to him, and rule in Italy by his credit, he must so manage the finances and settle the taxes as to free the minds of the citizens from suspicion and anxiety, that they may turn with a feeling of security to the pursuits of commerce and industry."*

Taxation, in the hands of Cosmo, was wont to serve as a poignard (*usò le gravezze in luogo de' pugnali*),† and under the democratic rule it was not less iniquitous or less fatal. Used without judgment or moderation, by men ignorant of the economic conditions of a city, eager to favour their own party and jealous of the fortune of others, this weapon overburdened the rich to the great joy of the poor. "It is in the nature of the populace to surcharge those who are in a

* *Mutazioni e riforme.* † *Reggim. di Firenze*, lib. i, p. 68.

position superior to their own; *la natura sua è carricare sempre adosso a chi ha più condizione*"*—a great error according to Guicciardini—the impoverishing of the wealthy being a loss to the city which they sustain in trying times, and which they largely maintain at all times by the employment they furnish to the people. One of the interlocutors in the dialogue on the *Reggimento politico di Firenze*, Bernardo del Nero, replying to the question of Guicciardini concerning the best possible tax to be fixed by law, points out the insufficiency of a tax on property to meet the requirements of the budget, the difficulty of calculating the returns on the incomes of commercial and banking firms, which, moreover it is both impolitic and impolite to scrutinize and publish—*business affairs being especially based on credit*; that taxes on consumption—as on flour and salt—are already very heavy at Florence, and that it would be impossible to make them any heavier without danger of a popular rising. In fact Bernardo arrives at no conclusion, and changes the subject.† But Guicciardini gives his own opinion in his *Scritti Varj*. He adopts general views

* *Reggim. di Firenze*, lib. i, p. 69. † Ibid. i., p. 173.

of the matter—arrived at by generalizing on the results of large personal experience. According to him it is highly desirable to retain duties on consumption — the consumption of necessaries, which would not hinder importation, since it is the consumer who pays the duty; but he would have the duty very light on merchandise which only passes through the territory, so as not to divert foreign commerce from a transit so advantageous to the public finances. Each year in the month of March the Government should present its budget of receipts and expenditure, and according to the requirements of the latter fix the figures of the former. If the ordinary revenue is insufficient to cover the expenses of the year, the State has three resources open to it—a new tax, which would be the cause of general discontent; a forced loan on all the wealthy subjects, a not less odious measure; or a loan concluded with the officers or farmers of the *Monte*, who should be furnished with the best security on the credit of the city, and who, being chosen each year, should be reimbursed at the expiration of the contract, either from the surplus or by a new loan; sometimes they might renew the contracts for a second year.

The following chapter is devoted to the *Decima Scalata*, the progressive tenth established at the time of the war with Pisa, but which should not in any case exceed three-tenths of the whole income (*non potendo però passare, per uno, tre decime*).* The historian imagines two pleaders in the Great Council, one favourable and the other opposed to the tax. The advocate of the progressive tenth maintains that it is an equal tax, because the poor man is as much incommoded by the payment of a tenth as the rich man by that of three-tenths; since with an income of fifty ducats, the tax hardly lessens the useless expenditure on luxury or the savings in the strong box. The rich man, therefore, has nothing to complain of, since he is not reduced to any grievous state of privation; the poor alone is disproportionately burdened. The rich man can reduce his establishment. The ideal state of things for a well-ordered city would be attained by all the citizens being habituated to the same style of living.† Let the rich take care lest, instead of a tax which only tickles them, they have one which cuts them to the quick.

* The estimate of the *Istoria Fiorentina* is a little different.

† "The Spartan ideal is often caught at by demagogues who are entirely ignorant of the historical and social conditions of Sparta." E. Gebhart.

Private wealth is not an advantage to the State. A law of public safety ought to forbid any single income to exceed 150 ducats, an amount fully sufficient to live honourably upon. "Our territory is small," he says, "and large estates only prevent the greater number of citizens from acquiring any land at all. The superfluity of the rich causes the misery of the poor. By their idle and luxurious lives they are an object of fatal emulation for the class below them, who, goaded on by ambition, and discontented with the stern severity of the popular government, think only of the overthrow of liberty and the re-establishment of tyranny. The rich do not know how to bring up their sons to face adversity; when misfortune comes, they fall so low that their case is pitiable. Libertines whose health has been ruined by dissipation, and the most fraudulent of debtors; they are a scandal in their city and a detestable example." The orator would be very happy to class with them, in the matter of taxation, all the *rentiers* (fund-holders) of the State, *if it were not important for the Government to maintain its credit.* He would spare the merchants, for they really exert themselves, bring foreign money to Florence, and chained

to their counters, care only for peace, and are indifferent to public honours. He ends by expressing a hope that the rich will relieve themselves of their embarrassing superfluities that there may be real equality among all the inhabitants of Florence.

The opponent of the progressive tax, who embodies the opinions of Guicciardini himself, forthwith warns the Council that if the political system of Florence, led away by brutish opinions, (*opinioni vane e bestiali*) is going to do away with all class distinctions, it is all over with the State—there is an end of its honour and influence abroad, as well as of its prosperity at home. True equality consists in the willing obedience of all to the same law, not in the oppression of a few by all the rest; it is the equality of freedom. It would not be less absurd to distribute the acquired wealth of the citizens, at so much a head, than to make a succession of the lowest and most ignorant of the people fill the great public offices instead of the wisest. The workman and the peasant have no right to pronounce themselves the equals of the chief magistrates. The human hierarchy is a divine law, necessary for the well-being of all. The accumulation, conservation, and

transmission of wealth constitute a natural right; it would be iniquitous to restrain by a system of taxation the exercise of this right; it would be at the same time a robbery and an outrage upon liberty. The proportional tenth weighs on the rich exactly in the same measure as on the poor; an equality which is destroyed by the progressive tenth. For the rich man is compelled, by his very wealth, to a style of living and a course of life quite different from that of the poor; those expenses which are pronounced superfluities are for him necessary expenses; to abstain from them would bring upon him the imputation of avarice; it would therefore be blamable to deprive him by excessive taxation of the power of living suitably to his fortune. To impoverish and irritate the rich and noble so as to drive them to desperation is to plot against liberty, and to conspire against the republic itself; it is like opening the gates to Piero de'Medici. It is written in the Gospel, "*Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to nought.*" It is not true that the rich think of nothing but political changes. Those who possess landed estates which they cannot carry into exile with them do not readily desire political con-

vulsions, but accommodate themselves to a popular system of government if it is fairly just and moderate. The progressive tax would destroy taxable material, since it would bring about the sale and partition of property. It is therefore as unprofitable as it is iniquitous. Guicciardini has no difficulty in disposing of the arguments based on the corruption and prodigality of the rich, on the agrarian laws which caused civil disorders without achieving anything, and on the severe simplicity of Spartan rule. He shows that Sparta had nothing in common with Florence—a commercial city occupied with banking and the arts of civilization (*umanità*) —where in the absence of a standing army trained on the Spartan model, wealth enough to pay mercenaries was the best guarantee for the national independence. It would be a contradiction to burden landed property and to spare trade and floating capital; for why should the merchant create wealth if he had not the inducement of being able to acquire fixed property? "He would be beating the air like one who finds no firm ground for his feet;" while for the capital not employed in trade he would have only one use: that of usury. After all, what

security would there be for floating capital in a state where one's landed property could be alienated by law? There is a logical sequence in affairs which links abuses to abuses. Florence, under such a system, with her prosperity arraigned and her industry paralysed, would see a return of her past troubles—those detestable times of the *Ciompi*—and the Medici, so odious to-day, would be invoked and longed-for to-morrow, as the saviours of the country.

The Florentine history of Machiavelli comes down to the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, at the eve of the social crisis hurried on by Savonarola, and which has been chronicled by Guicciardini. Dedicated to a Medici, Clement VII., it lauds "the goodness of Giovanni, the wisdom of Cosmo, the humanity of Piero, the prudence and magnificence of Lorenzo," and preserves a discreet silence on the oppression of the nobles and *bourgeoisie* by means of arbitrary taxation. Nevertheless, Machiavelli, the most unprejudiced thinker and profound observer of all the men of letters in Florence, has not a less keen perception than Guicciardini of the economic causes that underlie the greater

number of political events, and of the strict account which a statesman and historian ought to keep of facts relating to wealth.

When ambassador to Cæsar Borgia, he took care to counsel the Signoria to lose no time in despatching from Ancona the stores of Florentine merchandise on which the Duke was threatening to levy a contribution of war;* and in his different embassies to the Court of France he studies the natural resources of the country in detail, and the taxes and gabelles they furnished to the Crown—the precise amount of which he vainly endeavoured to ascertain. "They always tell me," he says, "that the total is whatever the king chooses to make it."† During his mission to Germany, he takes note of the system of savings, constantly increased by private economy, the rarity of importation, and the considerable amount of exportation, "which fills Italy with articles of Transalpine manufacture."‡

"I can no longer discourse upon the corporations (*arti*) of silk or wool, or reckon up gains and losses," he writes, after his fall from the obscurity of his poor little villa, to

* *Legaz. al Duca Valentino.*
† *Ritratti delle cose di Francia.*
‡ *Ritratti delle cose di Alamagna.*

Francesco Vettori, Florentine Ambassador to the Court of Leo X., "I can only talk politics."* Bitter irony this from the disgraced statesman who had brought such a marvellous faculty of analysis to bear on all questions of public business, who understood economic questions as thoroughly as military matters, and who will presently in his history of the fourteenth century and commencement of the fifteenth, account for the downfall of the Florentine aristocracy by the elevation of the wealthy industrial classes, and the convulsions of the republic by the grasping attitude of the poor. The history of Florence, so confused on the surface—a tissue of insurrections, conspiracies, and *coups d'état*—is simple and logical enough as conceived and presented to us by Machiavelli. A perpetual conflict between the three orders of the city, a displacement in the social hierarchy—the nobles obliged to make advances to the populace, to enrol themselves in the guilds of the minor arts, and conspire with the multitude against the *bourgeoisie* in order to regain power; finally a deterioration of the sentiment of justice, the law being changed into an instrument of perse-

* Lett. famil. xiii

cution for the conquerors, and spoliation considered the most precious privilege of the strongest. Hence, in the train of the political revolutions of the thirteenth century and the Guelph and Ghibeline reprisals, there followed the economic revolutions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the short reign and ignominious dismissal of the Duke of Athens, the defeat of the nobles in 1343, the first attempts against the *bourgeoisie* in 1372, the socialist rising of the *Ciompi* in 1378 against the art of wool and all the major arts, provoked in part by the disputes concerning wages; the *bourgeoise* reaction in 1381, and the decrees of torture and banishment proclaimed against the artisans in 1394. In 1423 the working classes are surcharged in the matter of war tax, a wrong which is retaliated upon the nobles in 1426; in 1427, by the institution of the *Catasto*, or additional levy on estates for the first time liable to the tax of the tenth on their income, the rich and noble were humbled once more. "But," says Machiavelli, "as men are never satisfied and always desire something beyond what they have obtained, the people, not content with the equality of taxation that was granted by law, demanded a tax on arrears,

and required that an estimate should be made of the amount the nobles had failed to pay according to the present *Catasto*, and that they should be made to pay enough to bring them down to the level of those who had been obliged to sell their estates in order to meet their liabilities." The rich protested on the plea of the offices they performed for the good of the State, and were told that they were at liberty to leave these functions to others who would willingly perform them without laying claim to any exemption from duty on the score of their exertions. Giovanni de'Medici moderated the excitement of both parties for a time; he obtained a promise that the new law should not be retroactive. It was enough for him that a legal weapon had been forged against the nobility and *bourgeoisie* of Florence.

Was there then for this distinguished city, which had been for nearly a century the very centre of Europe, no way out of this class-rivalry which was gradually habituating it to the demagogic temperament, save either the iron despotism of the Lombard tyrannies or the domination of the foreigner and the barbarian (*barbari*)? Machiavelli tries to find a solution for the problem, and like

Guicciardini he profoundly analyses the economic side of the question. The difficulty evidently lay in the preponderance of the democratic element, which could not be repressed, in spite of the imperative necessity there was of putting it back into its proper place. Delivered over to its blind instincts, its hatred and its false theories, the Florentine democracy would inevitably hurry on the fall of liberty. In the chapter on agrarian law in his *Dicourse on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, Machiavelli is evidently thinking of the progressive tenth, when he shows us the spoliated citizens throwing themselves into the arms of Sylla; as Guicciardini will presently show us the impoverished landholders plotting the restoration of the Medici. He, the *ci-devant* republican and follower of Savonarola, grown sceptical by experience, and whose disposition has been as much embittered as his wit has been sharpened by misfortune, dedicates to Pope Leo X. *A Discourse Concerning the Reformation of the State of Florence*, which is, perhaps, his crowning work, not displaying yet all the bitterness of *The Prince*, and containing the essence of his life-long study of the art of government in general and the genius of his native city in

particular. "The multitude will never be satisfied," he writes, "*la universalità de cittadini a' quali non si satisfarà mai*; it has mastered Florence and overthrown the aristocracy, thus rendering monarchy impossible, since it can only be upheld by the nobility." It appears to Machiavelli that only one way of safety is open to Florence, namely, a fusion of democratic institutions and aristocratic responsibilities, a system of government approaching as nearly as possible to the constitution of Venice. He shows admirably, in his discourses on Livy, the nature of the Venetian aristocracy. "They are nobles," he says, "rather in name than reality, for they have not large fixed property, their incomes depending chiefly on commerce; moreover, not one of them possesses either strong castles or any absolute jurisdiction over his fellow-citizens."* His memorial drawn up by request of Leo X., proposes the appointment of a number of men of elevated worth and superior endowments to sit in an aristocratic assembly and occupy in Florence the position filled in Venice by the hereditary nobility. *Alcuni che sono di animo elevato, e pare loro meritare di precedere agli altri a*

* Lib. i., cap. 25.

quali è necessario nell' ordinare la repubblica satisfare. A distinguished group no doubt, representing what the Greeks would have called the government of the best, but whose chances were very slender of being able to control a city which two centuries ago had adopted a political tradition the direct opposite to that of Venice—a city where the grandsons of the *Ciompi* of the fourteenth century had glorified Savonarola as a prophet and venerated him as a martyr.

The historians of Florence have left to the future the task of solving these problems, still so perplexing in our own day—formidable enigmas, which present themselves to us each evening for the morrow's solution. If we only consider the mental process by which they have been led up so surely, step by step, to these great questions, we can but pronounce their work a fruitful one. The Florentines renovated and widened history—first by economic science, and then by the diplomatic views of Machiavelli and Guicciardini. We have chosen for our subjects the first of these renovations, and have endeavoured to show how these historians, by a habitual search after precise data on the phenomena of public and private

wealth, and on systems of taxation, were led up to general views on the inherent causes of political movements and social struggles—in short, to a philosophy of Florentine history. By this method of theirs, no less than by their literary excellence, they belong to the Renaissance. They did their part in leading back the human mind into the old paths. Analysis made them familiar with the very same manner of arriving at matters of history, and reasoning on historic causes, which Aristotle, the master of analysis, had displayed in his *Politics*.

CHAPTER V.

RAPHAEL.

I HAVE devoted a previous chapter to the study of the three greatest citizens of the Italian peninsula, in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries—Dante, Savonarola, and Michael Angelo; noble souls, who owed to their sufferings the finest qualities of their genius, great poets, who saw, beyond the ruins of Italy and the Church, the blood-red dawn of the day of the Lord. It is not possible to separate their works from the ages in which they lived; to read the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio* without recalling Boniface VIII., Charles de Valois, and Henri VII.; or the *Sermons on the Prophet Amos*, without evoking the remembrance of Alexander VI., Charles VIII., and Cæsar Borgia; or really to understand the Sistine chapel and the tombs of the Medici, unless one bears in mind the league of Cambray, the invasion of the barbarians, the plague of Florence, and the sack of Rome. Our present study has to do with the most perfect painter the world

has ever seen, who was just attaining manhood when they burned Savonarola, and was contemporary with the most fruitful period of Michael Angelo :—with Raphael, whose career was one continual triumph, brought to an early close during the lifetime of his friend and patron Leo X., at the eve of the ill-fated pontificate of Clement VII. Yet I question whether we can discern in any of his works, which equal the sculptures of Greece in their serenity, a single trace of those troublous times during which liberty was lost to Italy, and unity to the Christianity of the West. It will be instructive to study the characteristics of Raphael's genius, and the originality of his inspiration, differing so entirely from that of Michael Angelo ; and to see how it was that he became in the sixteenth century the head of the Renaissance, the most accomplished disciple of the antique, and the purest master of Christian art.

He was born on the 6th of April, 1483, at Urbino, between the Apennines and the Adriatic, of an humble family of artists who had exercised the arts of painting and illuminating for many generations. His father, Giovanni Santi, or Sanzio, was both painter and poet, his *Annunciation* and his *Madonna*

recalling the best works of the Umbrian school. He was a good and pious man, who chose to have the infant nursed at its own mother's breast, and brought up in the shelter of the domestic hearth. He gave him the angelic name of Raphael, and taught his childish fingers to handle the pencil. The child became an orphan in 1494, and remained for some time under the guardianship of a maternal uncle, who sent him in 1496 to study under the renowned master of the school of Perugia, *Pietro Vannucci, il Perugino.* He spent eight years in the studio of this last representative of the old mystic tradition, on the heights of old Perugia, surrounded by the gentle undulations of the Umbrian hills, among the inspiring traditions of St. Francis, and in sight of that convent of Assisi where Giotto, two centuries before, had placed the cradle of Italian painting. The charming disciple—*il graziosissimo,* as he was called by his early friends —had then no conception of anything in art beyond the timid, though sometimes pathetic manner of his master whom he closely imitated, not daring to invent and knowing nothing yet of nature. The *Sposalizio,* at Milan, which is the most notable work in his

first manner, witnesses to the naïve docility with which he followed the precepts of Perugino. In 1504, on his return to Urbino, his genius took a bolder flight in the St. George and St. Michael of the Louvre, and he discovered for himself a method of depicting movement and action which had never been taught him by his master.

Towards the end of this year he visited Florence, carrying with him a letter of introduction from the Duchess Giannina della Rovere to the Gonfaloniere Soderini. "I send you," runs the letter, "Raphael, a painter of Urbino, a young man of the greatest promise, who wishes to spend some time studying art at Florence." Leonardo da Vinci and Michael Angelo were then working at the Palazzo Vecchio, and Fra Bartolomeo, an enthusiastic monk who had loved Savonarola, was the head of the Tuscan school. Florence offered to the study of young Raphael works of the most varied kinds—the pictures of Mantegna and Botticelli, the frescoes of Masaccio, of Ghirlandajo, master of Michael Angelo, of the two Lippi, and of Angelico of Fiesole. He saw Francia at Bologna, and Sodoma at Siena, and was afterwards received by the most distinguished men

in Italy—by Taddeo Gaddi at Florence, and at Urbino by the cultivated court of Isabella of Gonzago—by Baldassare Castiglione, Bibbiena, Bembo, Giulio de'Medici, Andrea Doria, Luigi di Canossa, and the *Casuists of Love*, who renewed in the language of Petrarch, the subtle and profound discussions of Plato.* The *Madonna of the Grand Duke*, which dates from this period, shows a considerable advance of power in Raphael. The Virgin, with her half-closed eyes, and half-veiled forehead, her attenuated form and stiff posture, still recalls the type of Perugino; but there is already more life of form and richness of colour, and the Holy Child, whose rounded limbs stand out in relief from the crimson robe of His mother, already gives promise in His pensive gravity of the infant Saviour of the *Madonna della Sedia* and the *Madonna di Foligno*. Michael Angelo's cartoon of *The Climbers* had been, in 1506, a revelation to him and all the artists of the day, of the rhythmic beauty of the human form and the natural harmony of its attitudes and movements; and he was always congratulating himself that he had been born during the lifetime of the great master. In

* See the *Cortigiano* of Castiglione.

1507, the *Madonna della Tenda*, and in 1508 the *Bella Giardiniera*, and the *Madonna al Baldacchino* show the influence over him of the dominant Florentine school. Perhaps, had he remained in Florence, he might have been only an incomparable disciple of Ghirlandajo, Fra Bartolomeo, Leonardo, and Michael Angelo. But the principal centre of the Renaissance was transplanted at that time from Tuscany to Rome, where Julius II. was gathering the painters and sculptors around him as Nicholas V. and Pius II. had done the philosophers and men of letters—and it was Rome alone, with its poetical traditions and the charm of its ruins and scenery—that could inspire Raphael, as formerly Virgil, with that mingled charm of grace and grandeur which the Italians express in one word, *Soave-Austero*.

The originality of an artist consists less in the expression of particular ideas and the invention of new forms, than in the personal aspect which he imparts to the traditions of his race and the sentiments of his contemporaries. Raphael was a Christian, an Italian of the sixteenth century, and also a Platonist. But in the concert of the Renaissance his note has not been less singular

than that of Michael Angelo, and is as easy to recognise and isolate from the marvellous symphony in which it bears a part.

Italian painting, taken as a whole, from Giotto to Leonardo da Vinci, has been religious after a manner in close conformity with Italian Christianity, which has a character of its own, little resembling either the stormy faith of the peoples of the North, or the feverish and fanatical religion of Spain. Disgust of the present life, and fear of the future, with the lurid dream of eternal misery, are almost unknown to it. Italy had gazed in amazement at Dante and Savonarola—with an interval of two centuries between them. If Germany or the Netherlands, Ireland or France, had possessed great poets and painters, even after the dreaded year of doom 1000, their art would only have expressed, but more clearly, the infinite sadness that is embodied in the gloom of the Romanesque churches, or the restless longing that taught the spires and pinnacles of the Gothic cathedrals to lose themselves in the clouds. It was not such a creed that built the noble churches of Pisa and Siena, Lucca, Pistoia, and Arezzo—where the light of heaven streams freely down upon sculp-

tured marbles—or the Certosa of Pavia that looks like a casket of precious stones; or the Camposanto, where roses garland the white porticoes and shed their petals on the tombs that bask in the glad sunshine. Italy devoted to enjoyment has made her Christianity rest on the single sentiment of love—love, boundless as sea and sky, which smiles in every expression of its religious thought—in the prophecies of Joachim of Flora, in the joyous songs of St. Francis, as well as in the visions and political enterprises of St. Catharine and the Societies of St. Anthony. Thus it is that its painting—powerless to express terror, even in the frescoes of Luca Signorelli in the Cathedral of Orvieto—has only manifested tenderness and enthusiasm. Signorelli had only been painting for a few years before Michael Angelo began his work in the Sistine chapel, and the Infernos which had preceded him—those of Giotto at Padua, and of the two Orcagnas and Fra Angelico at Pisa and Florence—would certainly never make any believer tremble. But how many simple souls must have tasted the delights of ecstasy, thanks to the early masters whose pencil reproduced with such touching piety on the walls of their churches the story of

redemption from the stable of Bethlehem to the cross at Calvary! From the first beginning of Christian art to the *Madonna del Arena* at Padua, the whole poem of Christianity is set forth in the frescoes of Giotto. In spite of his imperfect knowledge, when he composes the scenes of the Passion the old master rises with an heroic effort almost to the sublime, and attains to an unspeakable pathos.

Here may be seen, in the garden of Gethsemane, by the flickering light of the torches borne by the surging multitude, Judas, who with outstretched arms, and the gesture of a beast of prey, literally encloses the Christ whom he embraces, in the folds of his blood-red garment. Yonder are the Holy Women, with St. John and the few remaining friends of the Crucified One, weeping as they kneel and adore the Saviour whose head rests on His mother's arm, while afar on the heavenly heights the mourning angels veil their faces with their hands, and beat their wings for a downward flight, as if to take their places also as mourners at the grave! Love knows no weariness, and for two centuries painting kept incessantly repeating the same moving scenes. Poor monks might be seen, in the

monasteries of Umbria and Tuscany, working out in exquisite miniatures, on the margins of their vellum missals, the touching mysticism with which their souls were full to overflowing. The greatest and best was Fra Angelico, whose grace of manner was only equalled by Raphael, and who gave expression to one of the finest inspirations of religious art in his *Resurrection of Christ*, where the risen form of light walks out from the darkness of the sepulchre, His sacred arms extended in the form of the cross. Vasari assures us that "Angelico never used his pencil without consecrating the act with prayer, and whilst he was representing the Saviour on the cross his face would be bathed in tears." Perhaps the finest works of this school are the *Ecce Homo* of Sodoma and the *Deposition from the Cross* of Perugino. In the former, the Lord Jesus, bound by the arms to a pillar, crowned with thorns, and with bleeding brow, appears to be uttering the cry, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In the *Pietà* of the Pitti Palace, where the bystanders have such a peaceful and collected air, we may perceive a hope of the resurrection, in which Nature herself seems to sympathise, in the radiant landscape

which fills in the picture—with its palaces and groves, its shining river, and the distant hills, whose summits melt away into the blue of heaven.

But these tragic scenes are not the only food which art has furnished to the religious sentiment. The same schools and the same painters have aimed at awaking the tenderest emotions by representing more peaceful subjects. Giotto at Assisi, in his *Marriage of St. Francis with Poverty*, Spinello Aretino at Siena, Angelico da Fiesole in the *Coronation of the Virgin* at St. Mark's in Florence, and Sodoma in the *Ecstasy of St. Catherine*, have been able to perpetuate in purest colour visions of most exalted mysticism. But the supreme delight of pious souls was always to be found in the contemplation of the infant Saviour. The holy *Bambino* was the veritable God of Italy, the object of her devoutest worship, long after the decline of these schools of painting.

A pleasing succession of Madonnas and Bambinos, Holy Families, and Nativities, beginning with Guido of Siena and Cimabue, was carried on to the days of Raphael by the masters of Umbria and the artist monks; by Fra Angelico, Sandro Botticelli, Domenico

Alfani, and Perugino, in which the lovable qualities of the Italian genius blossom out into conceptions of charming naïveté. Around the humble cradle-bed, surrounded by the beasts of the stall, angels garlanded with living green sing with downcast eyes from the music books they hold, or present baskets of flowers, or bow like choristers before the altar, with hands meekly crossed over their bosoms, while shepherds kneel at the cradle-bed, or peep timidly over the rustic enclosure of the stall. In the Madonnas of Botticelli, Jesus surrounded by these beautiful angels, whose long golden tresses are adorned with lilies after a manner peculiar to the painter, plays with a half-opened pomegranate, or embraces His mother with a frank *empressement* which art has never reproduced. In the *Nativity* of Perugino, while the Virgin and St. Joseph are adoring the Holy Child as He lies asleep upon the ground, and lambs that have been deserted by their shepherds may be seen browsing confidingly under the shadow of the very portico beneath which Messiah reposes.

However, the influence of this school of painting, saturated with the Christian faith, and where even the meagreness of outline and

timidity of colouring are in keeping with the sanctity of the inspiration, does not constitute *all* the early education of Raphael. In order to understand him and the other great masters of the Renaissance, we must take into account a tendency which began to show itself pretty clearly in Giotto, and which only increased as time went on, particularly in Tuscany, among sculptors, as well as painters, a tendency which we must call *naturalistic* rather than *realistic*. It not only brought to each new step in the expression of the religious sentiment, a fresh advance also in the expression of life and movement, but unknown to itself perhaps, fostered and disciplined religious art, and saved it from two opposing dangers—that of a too rigid and ecclesiastical conventionalism on the one hand, and on the other that of a transcendent idealism incompatible with the draughtsman's art. In this appreciation and imitation of nature at first hand, the frescoes at Padua show the superiority of Giotto over Cimabue; we perceive it, for instance, in the thoroughly oriental costume of *The Holy Women*, in the Arab type of the bystanders in the *Resurrection of Lazarus*, and in the Semitic profile of Judas, as well as in the curious portrait of

Boniface VIII., by the same painter, in the Church of St. John Lateran. In the middle of the fourteenth century, Andrea Orcagna distinctly sanctioned, in the equestrian figures of his *Triumph over Death*, at Pisa, the introduction of portraits into great compositions. In the course of the fifteenth century naturalism was able to profit by Paolo Uccelli's discovery of perspective, by the picturesque taste of Masolino da Panicale, by Masaccio's discovery of chiaro-oscuro, and the drawings and mouldings from the antique made in Greece by Squarcione, by Mantegna's studies in foreshortening and drapery, and the intense and luminous colouring of the early Venetians. Masaccio, in the scenes from St. Peter's life in the Carmine at Florence, invariably associated *this*, the naturalistic tendency, with the loftiest inspiration. Fra Filippo Lippi, gifted with a more versatile imagination—by turns monk, corsair, and adventurer—and his son Filippino, applied themselves to express a strong individuality in types, truth in landscape, splendour in costume, and striking contrasts in colour. Ghirlandajo, as great in drawing as in colouring, introduced into his New Testament subjects in *Santa Maria Novella*,

portraits of the learned men and famous women of Florence—such as Politian, Marsilio Ficino, and Ginevra de'Benci. The naturalistic tradition passed on from him to Michael Angelo, with whom it began to deteriorate through his tendency to exaggerate muscular strength, but at the same time found its complete expression in the most distinctive master of the fifteenth century—Leonardo da Vinci.

No one, in fact, then possessed the love and study of nature in such a degree as this profound thinker, whose universal intelligence, capable of the most various speculations, gave him a glimpse of most of the modern sciences, and enabled him to arrive, as it were, intuitively at some of the greatest discoveries of modern times. Mathematician, engineer, anatomist, geologist, poet, and musician—the precursor of Pascal, Galileo, Vauban, and Cuvier—he undertook for painting, at the moment of its highest perfection in Italy, a complete scientific theory of its technical conditions; of light and shade and of perspective, of the anatomy of the horse, and the proportions in movement and repose of the divine human body, as he was pleased to call it. "I have done what I could," says

the epitaph, composed in his lifetime, "to acquire the science of proportion. May posterity pardon my shortcomings!" He interested himself in all the manifestations of nature, however humble. As a child, he had made a collection of bats, serpents, and lizards in his own chamber. When he became a fine gentleman he formed a menagerie of the rarest animals of Asia and Africa, and revelled in their magnificent colouring. Thanks to his consummate knowledge of life, he was able to delineate the most delicate shades of sentiment, and the most passing changes of thought. If he never knew the mystic devotion of Fra Angelico, or the religious sweetness of Raphael, or the Biblical sublimity of Michael Angelo, he was assuredly, thanks to his kindness of heart and nobility of soul, foremost among the masters of idealism. Certainly, in *The Last Supper*, in the Convent of the Grazie at Milan, of which we only possess the ruin, but which the copies of his pupils enable us to understand, we not only admire the harmony of the grouping, the truth of the Jewish profiles, and the sad or indignant expression of the various countenances, but we sympathise with the pathos by which Leonardo's

own soul was penetrated while depicting the family of apostles to whom the baseness of Judas is suddenly revealed. "Verily I say unto you one of you shall betray Me." At this announcement, while the faithful disciples vainly profess a devotion, which many of them will forget during the perils of the morrow, one feels, as well as knows, that the Son of Man is presiding at His Last Supper, and that the setting sun, whose parting rays seem to linger lovingly about the sacred head, is speaking thus caressingly a last farewell.

The *Cenacolo*, a work of Christian edification, belongs to the close of the fifteenth century, in virtue of its treatment, but in his pictures at the Louvre—the *Bacchus*, the *St. John* and the *Gioconda*—one finds in the inner thought of Leonardo a revelation of the Renaissance, tokens of an age in which the human mind, intoxicated with paganism and emboldened by the voluptuous morals of the period, boasted of inventing science and reproducing beauty. St. John, beautiful as a Grecian Ganymede, in the midst of a gorgeous landscape, is no longer the austere prophet feeding on locusts in the deserts of Palestine; he impersonates a young Bacchus,

a god of pleasure. In his lightning-glance the flame of passion unites with the pride of intellect, and it must surely be a pagan cry to which he is about to give utterance—the old Evohe. The *Gioconda*, standing erect at the entrance of a labyrinth of rocks and winding streams, that lose themselves in the mists of the horizon, with a sinister smile on her thin, compressed lips and a treacherous gleam in her eye, is the bewitching embodiment of flattery. The picture has a mysticism of its own, which Greece knew of old in the orgies of the Asiatic religions, and of which the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries caught a passing glimpse—a mysticism whose troubled fascination could only be rendered by the leading painter of the naturalistic school. In this unprecedented effort of art we can foresee that rupture with the old faith that was foretold by Savonarola, and which it is now easy to discern at the bottom of the Renaissance movement. It was for Raphael to put off the evil day by the new school he was about to form.

He reigned in it for twelve years, reconciling the two dominant traditions we have described, which had hitherto shared the realm of painting. Thus it was that, even

by the side of Michael Angelo, he was the master *par excellence* of Italian art, as well as the head of the Roman school. From 1508 until his death, his activity was prodigious, in spite of his being distracted during the pontificate of Leo X. by the pleasures of the court, and by the demands which architecture made upon him, after the death of Bramante, for the Basilica of St. Peter's. We must take into account, not only the pictures he executed with his own hand, but his numerous drawings and cartoons, and the works of which he furnished the sketch or the idea for his pupils to work out under his direction. Let us try to select from this immense collection, whose bare catalogue fills a thick volume in M. Passavant's Life of Sanzio, the works best fitted to determine the essential qualities of his genius.

The pupil of Perugino brought to the study of animated nature a zeal as earnest as that of Leonardo. We have proof of it in his drawings in pen-and-ink, red lead, or sepia, representing the development and action of the undraped human form, with sometimes the study of a foot, an arm, a profile or a bit of drapery by the side of a complete figure. We can see by the loading and retouching,

by the constant foreshortening, the strong relief of the fleshy parts and the anatomic detail of the bony ones—even in the deliberate exaggeration of knees, heels, and elbows—to what an extent he occupied himself with reality. When he undertook to paint a draped figure he first sketched it nude; and in some of his drawings of naked figures we meet with the initial idea of some draped personage in one of his finished pictures. Hence, in all his works, the life and movement of the draperies which, as in Greek sculpture, always express the character and attitude of the form they clothe. By studying the proportion and harmony of forms, no less than their truth, he gave a plastic character to all his figures. For instance, in his *Galatea* he reproduced the principle of equilibrium, set forth by Polycletas, who always placed on a single foot the centre of gravity of the whole body, thus leaving to the other side full freedom of movement. To harmony of line he added richness of colouring—colouring less seductive perhaps than that of Veronese and the Venetians, and more severe, but often equalling them in power, as, for instance, in the *Miracle of Bolsena*, and in the greater number of his

portraits. The early masters of Umbria had satisfied themselves with one unvarying type of graceful and languishing beauty, and the Tuscan school had hitherto done little but reproduce the Florentine type—Leonardo, in his female faces, having twenty times repeated the Milanese physiognomy of the *Gioconda*. But Raphael imagined faces fuller than the Florentine, and more delicate than the Roman, thus arriving naturally at the Greek type, which he often reproduced still more closely by giving an almost straight line to the profile, and always by that exquisite grace, which was not only the first characteristic of his youths and maidens, madonnas and children, but also reappeared, as with the Greek artists, in his gravest and most mature characters.

We will here allude to one of the influences most conducive to the formation of his genius. After having assimilated all the religious inspirations of his youth, dutifully followed the teaching of his masters, and acquired all the knowledge possessed by his contemporaries, he came face to face with the treasures of ancient art, and went more deeply into the study of them than even the great sculptors of the Renaissance, Donatello

and Michael Angelo. In this respect, his education began in 1503, at the Cathedral of Siena, before the group of *The Three Graces*, which he imitated in his drawing for the Academy of Venice, and in the miniature now in the possession of Lord Ward. At Rome he came upon the already numerous treasures of Hellenic sculpture, and in the three different Apollos which he painted for the *Camera della Segnatura*, we may see with what a sure instinct of taste he understood the character of lyrical enthusiasm and calm and victorious strength which the school of Scopas gave to its favourite divinity. The discovery of the Baths of Titus and *The Golden House* of Nero, gave him an opportunity of studying the antique school of decorative painting, which has since been exhumed for us from the ashes of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and which he reproduced in the Loggias of the Vatican, on the walls of the Farnesina, and in the bath-room of Cardinal Bibbiena. Appointed by Leo X. Superintendent of the Antiquities of Rome, he protested, in a generous letter to the Sovereign Pontiff, against the reckless devastations which had formerly aroused the indignation of Petrarch, and which still disgraced the

Renaissance. "It is your part, Holy Father," he writes, "to preserve these vestiges of the venerable mother of Italy from being destroyed by the ignorant and evilly-disposed. Too many insults have already been offered to the memory of those great souls who have given such glory to the world, to our country, and to ourselves."

Finally, the Platonic philosophy which had been enchanting Italy for the last fifty years, and now made a sort of religious atmosphere of its own round about Raphael, with its apostles and chief priests, put the finishing stroke to his understanding of Hellenism. When we look at his fresco of *The School of Athens*, we are struck with the historic sentiment and the exact scholarship it displays. Take away the single character of Zoroaster, which a Renaissance prejudice has placed there, and you have an exact representation of the attitude and vicissitudes of Greek learning. First, perhaps, of all the moderns, Raphael, in his letter to Castiglione concerning his Galatea, expressed the Platonic theory of the ideal in the arts of design.

"I know," he says, "that to paint one beautiful woman, I must see several, and I would that your lordship were with me to

choose the most suita ble ; but there are so few good judges and so few good models, that I work after a certain idea I have in my mind. I do not know whether this idea has any excellence, but I force myself to realize it."

"He used to say," relates Zuccaro, "that a painter ought to represent things, not as Nature has made them, but as she ought to have made them. Was not this the theory of Plato, the leading thought of Phidias, Sophocles, and Apelles?" In his mythologic compositions also, Raphael, without any affectation of archaism, had always the true taste of the ancients, that happy mixture of nobleness and simplicity, charm and grandeur, so attractive both in the sculpture and poetry of the Greeks. He searched the works of Homer, Anacreon, Lucian, Pliny, or Philostrates, for pictorial subjects and descriptions, and equalled the vivacity of what may be called the *genre* painting of the ancients in his *Marriage of Alexander and Roxana*, surpassed the legend of Apuleius in moral elevation in his *History of Psyche*, at the Farnesina, —and even approached to the dignity of sculpture in his *Jupiter Embracing Cupid*. In the triumphant *Galatea*, floating in her shell

among the loves and demigods of the ocean, over the shining waves, he united to the magnificent serenity of the highest art a chasteness of design unknown to Theocritus and Ovid; and if the *Sibyls* of the Church of *Santa Maria della Pace* have not the dread solemnity of the prophetesses of Michael Angelo, yet certainly the dignity of their attitudes, and the severe beauty of their countenances, are in keeping with the revelation of the archangel which they are reading from the unrolled scroll, *Resurgam, I will rise again.*

Here then we have a painter, who, having appropriated all the knowledge of the naturalistic schools of the fifteenth century, possessed at the same time the idealism of the ancients. Of a very gentle, somewhat feminine disposition, the natural bent of Raphael's genius led him to choose quiet subjects favourable to the grace of his personages, rather than compositions of more sublimity and pathos, where the artist would be compelled to portray dramatic movement or passionate disquietude. I do not of course forget the *Vision of Ezekiel*, where in spite of the small size of the canvas he rises to the heights of Michael Angelo,—

nor *The Entombment* at the Palazzo Borghese, in which we can see the last trace of the influence of Perugino,—nor the mournful *Spasimo* in the museum at Madrid, where on His way to Calvary the Saviour falls under the burden of the Cross,—nor the cartoons at Hampton Court that fulfil so exactly the conditions of decorative painting;—nor the *Battle of Constantine* and *The Burning of Rome*, executed by his pupils,—nor the *Heliodorus Driven from the Temple*, the *St. Leo Stopping the March of Attila*, and the *Deliverance of St. Peter*. Does not his last work, *The Transfiguration*, where the execution of two distinct scenes in one picture shows an already laborious effort to realize the sublime and at the same time produce dramatic effect, show that at the close of his life he was leaning in a direction that would be fatal to Italian painting? We must at least consider Raphael best represented by that series of works of a gentler inspiration which includes, besides *The Sibyls* and the frescoes at the Farnesina, all his portraits, his Madonnas and Holy Families, and his two crowning works, the *Dispata del Sacramento*, and *The School of Athens*.

As a portrait-painter, if we consider the

diversity of his subjects, and the firmness and truth of his drawing modelling and colouring, he certainly equals the old masters; while for happily seizing any forcible expression of the permanent characteristics of each sitter—so that his portrait is his veritable ideal—he appears to me incomparable. Bembo wrote to Bibbiena: "Raphael has been painting our friend Tebaldeo with such truth that the man seems less like himself than like his portrait." Here indeed the artist was realistic even in unfortunate details. The secretary of the conclave which elected Leo X. Phedra Inghirami, squints frightfully with the right eye. He is seated, clothed from head to foot in crimson, pen in hand at a table covered with tapestry, his paper and writing-desk before him. "Here is a big man in the prime of life," says a critic, "his countenance proclaims him a man of learning, and his delicate fat hands give evidence that he did not know how to wield any other weapon than the pen." This personage in the Palazzo Borghese, in spite of his long, purple gown, and the book which he holds without reading it, would wield the dagger or arquebuss with a will in some doubtful enterprise. It is a

Cardinal Borgia who had the surprising good fortune to survive his cousin Alexander VI.:—long-headed, violent and cruel, a Spaniard all over—with his black beard, prominent forehead, and half-bald head beneath the red berretta, his wrinkled face, and deep-set, hard, black eyes—he is a worthy neighbour of this other personage probably by Raphael, whom we recognise as Cæsar Borgia, a perfect specimen of the Condottiere and gentleman-highwayman. There he stands, his padded form tightly encased in his black velvet doublet, one hand on the hilt of his dagger—the forehead white and prominent, the eyes restless and impudent, the nose aquiline as the beak of a bird of prey, the nostrils distended, the lips sensual, the thin, red beard divided into two points, with a red-plumed black berretta on his head, he parades before us a lowering splendour that might set Macchiavelli musing. His Cardinal Bibbiena, both at the Madrid Museum and at the Pitti, has a thin, sharply cut Italian face, and vivacious eyes that make one think involuntarily of the very uncanonical author of the *Calandra*. In the benevolent expression of Castiglione at the Louvre, with his intelligent forehead and

spiritual mouth, one recognises at once the diplomatist, the savant, and the devoted friend of Raphael. The old Pope, Julius II., seated in his armchair with a handkerchief in his hand, his head covered with a fur-lined velvet cap, and his grey beard flowing down over the purple cape, is plunged in melancholy thought. The magnificent Leo X. sits at a table covered with costly tapestry, on which are placed a hand-bell in fine-wrought gold, and a missal enriched with miniature paintings, which he has just been examining with a magnifying glass. Behind him, on the right, stand two cardinals. His head is covered in the same manner as that of Julius II., and he wears under the short cardinal's cloak a shining cassock of white silk damask, and large sleeves trimmed with ermine. The comely fresh-coloured face, the beautiful hands, the fine eyes which express both sweetness and intellect, agree well with what contemporaries tell us of the noble and gracious presence, the suavity and political dexterity of the noblest Pope of the Renaissance. The story goes that while Raphael was painting this picture near the open window of his studio in the Vatican, the good people who passed to and fro on the

Piazza San Pietro, thinking they saw Leo X. himself, saluted it with the deepest reverence.

In his faces of young people, such as Frederic of Mantua and Bindo Altoviti—in the portraits he has painted of himself, and above all, in the nameless portraits drawn from models that adorn the walls of the Louvre and the Palazzo Sciarra—the *Young man resting his head on his hand*, for instance, and *The Violin-player*—Raphael has aimed at an exquisite ideal, which he was not at liberty to work out in the portraits we have just described, and has attained to the perfection of lovebleness; whether we dwell on their simple transparent handling, their Venetian witchery of colour, the sweetness of the countenances, the silken texture of the waving hair, or the ineffable charm of the dreamy, meditative gaze. These attractive qualities, perhaps the most precious characteristics of his genius, are still more marked in the sacred subjects he has treated so devoutly, and which have made his name so popular. Up to the time of his death, even in the midst of the most conflicting claims, he returns incessantly to the Madonnas and Holy Families which had engaged his boyish

efforts in his father's studio. In some of them, such as the Madonnas *of the House of Alva*, and of the *House of Aldobrandini*, and the *Vierge au diadême*, and *Petite Sainte Famille* of the Louvre, he animates the exquisite naïvetè of the old mystics with a spiritual intention. Here, the Holy Child presents a red carnation to the little St. John, or eagerly takes the little reed cross from him with one hand, while the other is clasped about the neck of His mother. There, as He lies asleep upon the ground, the Virgin raises the veil which covers Him, and shows Him to the kneeling St. John; and in this, Jesus, standing up in His cradle, stretches out His arms over His mother's knees to stroke with both hands the cheeks of the little Forerunner, who gravely maintains an attitude of adoration. In the *Holy Family of Francis the First*, the religious attitude of the principal figures, and the presence of the angels, give to the composition a severer character; and in the *Madonna della Sedia*, where the Virgin's face is one of peaceful beauty, the Holy Child, who appears to shrink back timidly within His mother's arms, has eyes of melancholy foreboding. The *Madonna di Foligno*, encircled by an aureole of angels on a back-

ground of gold, sits in queenly majesty on a throne of cloud above the dusky fields of Foligno, over which a storm is brooding; while the Dresden Madonna, the last he ever painted, soars gloriously with her Son upward to the highest heavens upon a flood of light, and the hosts of angels that people the azure sky, as well as St. Sixtus draped in cloth of gold kneeling at her feet, pay court to her as to a goddess.

This marvellous painter was moreover one of the first thinkers of his age, and holds a foremost place in the intellectual movement of the Renaissance. He knew how to express, in the language of his art, a profound conception of the problem then perplexing the votaries both of Christianity and free thought, concerning the relative claims of human science and spiritual authority. He undertook the paintings of the *Disputa del San Sacramento* and *The School of Athens* in the Vatican, in the very year that saw Michael Angelo begin the series of paintings in the Sistine chapel, of which *The Last Judgment* was to form the conclusion, and which are penetrated throughout by a thought of such deep despair. Let us recall the working out of that drama of the Fall of Man,

where the sin of Adam forms the point of departure, and where the Prophets and Sibyls, as so many symbols of terror, desolation, and wrath, follow one another through all the scenes of mourning and woe, whose last act is the resurrection of the dead and the destruction of the damned. For Michael Angelo had forgotten the Redemption; and it is this very Redemption of Man that Raphael begins by affirming, in the first of his two great works in the *Camera della Segnatura*. In the upper part of the *Disputa* we see the Holy Trinity, the Virgin, the Forerunner, and the Saints of both Old and New Testaments presiding from the heights of paradise over the Council of Fathers, Popes and Doctors, seated or standing right and left of the altar, gazing on the Eucharist, and meditating, or solemnly conversing, on the mystic pledge of the reconciliation between Earth and Heaven. Among them we recognise the great metaphysicians and founders of the Church, Ambrose and Jerome, Augustine dictating his thoughts to a disciple, St. Bernard as the last of the Apostles, St. Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventura, Gregory the Great and Innocent III.: beyond them Dante, crowned with laurel, and the ascetic countenance of Savonarola.

Then come bishops and monks, young men kneeling with clasped hands, a scholar who has just cast his books down at his feet, and lastly the painter of Christian enthusiasm, the blessed Fra Angelico of Fiesole. Angels descend upon the clouds of heaven towards the august assembly, and, opening the pages of the four Gospels, proclaim the forgiveness of Heaven—sealed, according to St. Matthew, by the Son of David—according to St. John, by the Eternal Word—a reconciliation of which the prophets of Michael Angelo have never given us a glimpse—with all their apocalyptic visions.

On the opposite wall, Raphael has grouped along a portico *The School of Athens.* At the foot of the marble steps and on the ground floor he has placed the masters of the oldest philosophies—the mathematicians and physicists whose researches, abandoned for a time by Socrates and Plato, reappeared in Aristotle with a power reinforced by observation.

On the left sits Pythagoras writing in a book, and in front of him a pupil presenting a tablet inscribed with the harmonic scale according to the Greek notation; around him are grouped Archytas of Tarentum, the

learned Theano, and a turbaned Arab who represents Asia in the schools of Greece. Anaxagoras stands in the midst, turning towards the philosopher of Samos; at one extremity of the group the smiling Democritus, his head crowned with foliage, leans against a column, and at the other the sombre Heraclitus of Ephesus, his elbow resting on a pedestal, is inscribing some bitter sentence on the flight of time and the vanity of human things.

Diogenes, the Cynic, lies upon his cloak half naked in the middle of the steps, the first floor being occupied by the family of astronomers and geometricians, some of whom hold aloft the celestial and terrestrial globes, while young disciples bend down to follow the movements of a master who is demonstrating with a pair of compasses. All these philosophers are reflecting or explaining; controversy meanwhile appears higher up in the picture, on the platform of the portico, represented by the masters of Greece.

Socrates is disputing apart, with the young Xenophon, a sophist, an artisan, and the graceful Alcibiades, who is clad in armour; while near them stands old Aristippus of

Cyrene, with arms crossed under the folds of his mantle. Under the triumphal arch, which occupies the centre of the picture, and whose summit stands out from the azure sky, Plato and Aristotle may be seen with two parallel rows of attentive listeners. Plato is depicted as an old man with white hair and beard; one hand supports his book of *Timæus*, while he extends his right arm towards heaven with the enthusiasm of the poet and the majesty of the pontiff.

Aristotle, still young, the hair of his manly head yet glowing with the golden tints of youth, and his eyes fixed upon the master, holds in one hand his book of *Morals*, and with the other directs the attention of the sublime dreamer, with a gesture of supreme authority, to this earth where, in the bosom of eternal nature, the living realities that underlie all science germinate and flourish, forgotten by Plato in his reveries.

And while these two men, the greatest perhaps in history, are discussing the great verities by which our world still lives its life, their disciples on either side—those of Plato for the most part the youths of the *Banquet* and the *Lysis*, full of religious emotion, and those of Aristotle, peripatetic

sages, with Zeno the proud founder of the stoic sect—listen in grave silence. Here, one is eagerly mounting the steps to hear the master's letter, there, another sitting on the ground makes rapid notes upon the tablets on his knee; here Epicurus, reserved and lonely, moves away disdainfully in his robe of purple, making way for an old man in sacerdotal garb—there Plotinus, or Porphry, clad as an Eastern sage, comes staff in hand to rejuvenate the mysticism of Egypt with the doctrines of Hellenism.

Such were Raphael's liberal views on the ideal life of humanity, and the peaceful encounter of faith with science, only ten years after the martyrdom of Savonarola, in the noble age which saw two Platonists—Pierre Ramus and Giordano Bruno—perish by steel and flame!

The biographers of Raphael give the following account of his last days, of which the original document has not been recovered. "He was of a very delicate complexion, and body and soul appeared to be held together only by a thread. Indeed he appeared at times to be all soul. His bodily powers, moreover, were early impaired by the excessive labour which made men marvel how he

could produce so much in so short a time. One day, when he was feeling very exhausted at the Farnesina, the Pope sent for him to come immediately to court. He ran all the way to the Vatican, and arrived there out of breath and in a violent perspiration. During the lengthened consultation in the great hall about the works going forward at St. Peter's, his perspiration received a sudden check, which soon resulted in serious illness. On reaching home he was seized with a burning fever, which in a few days carried him to the grave."

According to another account, Leo X. wept abundantly on hearing of his death, and murmured: *Ora pro nobis.* Some, standing by, thought that the Pope invoked Raphael as a saint, and the report spread quickly of his approaching canonization. A Venetian gentleman, one Mark Antonio di Ser Vettore, wrote some days later, "At three o'clock in the morning of the day after Good Friday died the excellent painter, Raphael d'Urbino. The Pope has felt it very acutely. He had sent at least six times to inquire for him during his short illness, and as the roof of his own private apartments happened to fall in at the very same time, obliging his Holiness to re-

move to those occupied by Monsignor Cibo, many people say that the disaster was not caused by the weight of building overhead, but was a miracle sent to announce the death of one who had done so much to beautify the palace. He has been buried at the Pantheon with great honour. They say, too, that Michael Angelo is ill at Florence. Apropos of this, tell our Catena to take care of himself, since great painters are in such danger. May God be with us!" Count Castiglione wrote to his mother, "I am in good health, but feel as if I cannot really be in Rome, since my dear Raphael is no longer here. May his soul be blessed in the arms of his Saviour."

He had taken his own portrait many times, —from the drawing in the Oxford collection where he is fifteen years of age, to that of *The Fencing-master*, where he is in his thirty-sixth year. The most engaging of them all is one to be found in most galleries, taken from the original, now lost, by his friend Francia. He appears to be about twenty-two years old, —and the beardless face is of a very delicate oval, whose lines would be all Greek if the nose were a little less marked and the lower part somewhat fuller. He wears a large

black berretta, thrown back over the long hair, which is parted in the middle like a girl's and falls in abundant waves over his shoulders. He sits with his right arm resting on a table, in a white dress whose ample sleeves are tied in at the wrist; a magnificent cloak of ermine and gold brocade is thrown over the left shoulder, and hangs down behind; a bit of wall and a landscape fill in the background. It is the beauty and purity of the expression, more than the imposing attitude and regal costume, or even the ideal beauty of the features, that reveal the harmonious genius we have endeavoured to describe.

CHAPTER VI.

POPE LEO THE TENTH.

Pope Julius II. died in February, 1513,—"master of this world and winner in the game of life," writes a Venetian ambassador,—monarch of the Peninsula from Piacenza to Terracina, leaving to the Church the temporal dominion over Italy, convinced that his work was good and lasting, and that the French having been at last driven beyond the Alps, Milan restored to the Sforza family and Florence to the Medici, Rome, protected by the armies of Spain and the Empire, was henceforth the political centre of Christendom. "In these days," says Machiavelli, "even the King of France himself respects the pontifical power." He whom his contemporaries surnamed The Terrible, as he went helmet on head and sword in hand to the storming of towns,—intolerant of the abuses that were ruining the Church, and uneasy perhaps about the choice of his successor,—had fulminated anathemas against simony in the election of popes. Now, death had come upon him

suddenly at a moment of inordinate pride, and the first care of the cardinals at the opening of the Conclave was to decide that the benefices and dignities of the newly elected Pope should be divided amongst his electors. They were therefore on the point of choosing the richest and most completely mediocre prelate of the sacred college, Raphael Riario, a nephew of Sixtus IV.; but, thanks to the negotiations of the most useful of their eminences, who wished for a liberal and pacific Pope, the majority of suffrages fell on a cardinal only thirty-eight years of age, Giovanni de'Medici, son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. At present he was only a deacon, but they ordained him priest on the 15th of March, bishop on the 17th, and on the 19th he received the triple crown and blessed the people pontifically. On the 11th of April, Leo X. mounted on the Turkish charger which had carried him at the battle of Ravenna, and escorted by cardinals and ambassadors, traversed Rome with great pomp, and presented himself at St. John Lateran, where he found 300,000 sequins, accumulated by Julius II., which he made haste to scatter in spectacles and rejoicings. A few days later, as a good kinsman, he gave

the archbishopric of Florence with the red hat to his cousin Giulio the future Clement VII. The jovial Bibbiena, and a grandson of Innocent VIII. just twenty years of age, likewise received the purple.

Soon after his elevation a little cloud appeared on the political horizon; a Florentine conspiracy against the Medici, in which unfortunately Machiavelli had been engaged just before the election. The Secretary of State was disgraced, put in irons—and to the torture. Boscoli and Capponi, the chiefs of the conspiracy, mounted the scaffold. Two monks, who ministered to them in their last moments, reminded them, with a liberty of speech worthy of the revolutionary Savonarola, of the opinion of St. Thomas, "If the tyrant reigns by force, and in spite of the people, it is meritorious to conspire against him." But the new pontiff could laugh at his monks, and the splendours of his accession hid from him the premonitory signs of a tempest which Alexander VI. had foreseen, and which Julius II. was not spared long enough to avert.

If the Conclave only desired to place a benevolent and cultivated fine gentleman at the head of the Church, their election of Leo X.

was certainly a happy one. He belonged to the most powerful family in Italy, and from his child hood had been accustomed to the enjoyment of temporalities. At eight years of age he had received the archbishopric of Aix from Louis XI. He was a cardinal at thirteen: canon of the cathedrals of Florence, Fiesole and Arezzo, rector of Carmignano, of Giogoli, of San Casciano, of San Giovanni del Val d'Arno, of San Pietro di Casale, and San Marcelino di Cacchiano; prior of Monte Varchi; chanter of St. Antonio of Florence; provost of Prato; abbot of Monte Cassino, the first monastery in Italy, of San Giovanni at Passignano, of Miransù in the Val d'Arno, of Santa Maria at Morimondo, of San Martino, of Fontedolce, of San Salvatore, of Vajano, of San Bartolomeo d'Anghiari, of San Lorenzo di Coltibuono, of Santa Maria di Montepiano, of St. Julien at Tours, of San Giusto and San Clemente di Volterra, of San Stefano di Bologna, of San Michele d'Arezzo, of Chiaravalle near Milan, of the Pine in Poitou, and the Chaise-Dieu in Auvergne. These high ecclesiastical dignities, moreover, imposed no spiritual duties on the young cardinal. He was at leisure to study Greek under Politian,

Demetrius Chalcondyla and Peter of Ægina; ancient and modern literature, under Bernardo Michellozzi and Bibbiena; and philosophy and the sciences, with Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola. He acquired a taste for the beautiful by frequenting the rich art-collections formed by his father, and by living face to face with the statues and pictures that adorned his palaces and villas; while he cultivated fugitive verse by listening to the *Canti Carnavaleschi* and songs for the dance, which were sometimes composed by Lorenzo himself; Philippo Decio and Bartolomeo Sozzini meantime initiated him into the mysteries of canon and civil law. He was passionately devoted to athletic sports, and spent in the chase any time he could snatch from books. He even interested himself in theology, and at the age of eighteen received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the university of Pisa. Lengthened travel in France, Germany and Flanders, in the company of eleven young gentlemen of noble family, an *incognito* residence at Rome during the closing days of Alexander VI., and considerable experience of camp life as legate in the armies of Julius II., finished the education of

the prince for whom fortune had in store the throne of Gregory VII. and Boniface VIII.

Leo X. was no sooner seated in the chair of St. Peter, than he thought himself powerful enough to indulge the fatal passion that had tormented the papacy for a quarter of a century—that of nepotism. "Now let us enjoy ourselves and do good to our own people" he said repeatedly to his brother Giulio. Not content with reigning in Florence by his family, he coveted for them the Milanese and the kingdom of Naples; he wanted to create a kingdom of Tuscany for his nephew Lorenzo, and a principality of Modena, Reggio, Parma, and Piacenza for Giulio; he even dreamt of bestowing on a Medici the imperial crown. All these projects, pursued by the aid of a capricious and crooked policy, threw Italy afresh into dangerous complications. Leo X. brought the Holy See into imminent peril by his family ambition. He carried this passion much further than had ever been done by Julius II., who never made wars except for the aggrandisement of the Church; further even than Alexander VI., who at least delivered Italy from petty tyrants; he fell back into the senile and scandalous policy of Sixtus IV.

However he carried on the schemes of Julius II., and united in one effort the two principal objects of his predecessor; the subjugation of Venice and the humiliation of France. Strong in the alliance of England, Spain, and the Empire, he opposed a Swiss army at Novara to Francis de la Tremouille, and while the English invaded France from the north, the Spaniards by Guienne, and the Swiss by Burgundy—the pontifical army penetrated to the lake district; the cannon of Raymond de Cardona destroyed the richest quarters of Venice, and men learned with horror that a vassal of the Empire, in the pay of St. Peter, was putting out the eyes and cutting off the fingers of the inhabitants of Friuli. Italy, betrayed by the Pope, a prey to the pillage of the Swiss and the cruelties of the Spaniards, persisted in looking to France, which once before, in the time of Charles VIII., had saved her from the Medici. But Louis XII., tired of war, was already yielding to the adroit caresses of Leo X., who, frightened by the threats of the Sultan Selim, set himself perforce to restore peace among the princes of Christendom. Italy appeared destined henceforth to be nothing more than an appanage of the Medici,

when Francis I. appeared upon the scene. It pleased the most Christian king to open his reign by a chapter of romance, and chivalrously to break the chains of the beautiful captive, while conquering the rich duchy of Milan. He set out accordingly with all the impetuous ardour of a paladin of King Arthur, and baffling the strategy of the Swiss, who kept all the practicable passes of the Alps urged his infantry and heavy artillery across the rocks and glaciers of the Col de l'Argentiere. In four days, by means of defiling between the precipices, laying beams over chasms, and getting cannon up and down by cables, the French army, 40,000 strong and very light of provisions, made the pass, debouched at the sources of the Po, and taking Prospero Colonna by surprise as he sat at table, aided by a skilful manœuvre of the Venetians, marched upon Milan, and took up its position in the plain of Marignan. The Spaniards and the pontifical troops hesitated, ready to fall back; but 20,000 Swiss, hastening from St. Gothard, rejoined 10,000 of their compatriots, whom the Cardinal of Sion was urging furiously to the combat. "I want to wash my hands in the blood of these Frenchmen," he said.

The battle began on the 13th September 1515, and lasted during two days. On the first day, Francis I. and the Constable de Bourbon, in spite of three warnings, allowed themselves to be surprised. Francis had only time to receive the order of knighthood from the hands of Bayard, and to leap to horse. That day the battle appeared lost. Without infantry and artillery, the French were routed. The Cardinal de Sion despatched a courier to Rome, where the Pope had bonfires lighted in token of rejoicing. But as soon as the moon went down, while the country was resounding with the horns of Uri and Unterwalden, the old captains of Francis I. manœuvred the artillery in silence, and reformed the army behind the cannons.

At dawn sixty-two bronze mouths opened upon the astonished Swiss, who gave ground, then returned right to the cannons' mouth, and were scattered.

At ten o'clock the war cry of Venice was heard in the distance—*San Marco! San Marco!* It was the cavalry of the republic which had been hastening to the rescue all night, and had outstripped the infantry of St. Mark. Then the Swiss, leaving 10,000 of their number on the field of battle, retreated

proudly and deliberately upon Milan. On the morrow, however, they gladly accepted the pay of Francis I., and took their way back to their native mountains, shorn for ever of their old military glory.

The bonfires had hardly burnt themselves out in Rome, when the Venetian ambassador arrived early in the morning at the Vatican and presented himself to Leo X., who came to him half dressed.

"Your Holiness," he said, "sent me yesterday a *false* and disastrous report; I bring you a happy and true one. The Swiss are defeated!"

And he showed him the despatch of Dandolo, whose good faith was well known to the Pope.

"What will become of us?" he exclaimed in dismay; "Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, we had better see what the most Christian king will do, and throw ourselves on his mercy."

The Venetian orator replied—

"Holy Father, your Holiness will take no harm. Is not the most Christian king the eldest son of the Church?"

However time was pressing. Francis I., in a military progress through Tuscany, might expel the Medici from Florence, and

enter Rome by the very gate that had admitted Charles VIII. He was now, writes Vettori, the master in Italy. Leo X. resigned himself to humble the pontifical majesty before the victor, and, in spite of the opposition of his cardinals, set out for Bologna, to meet Francis I. He made quite a triumphal entry into Florence, where the town was decorated with flowers and tapestry. Escorted by a hundred young men of the most distinguished families, and sheltered under a canopy borne by the Gonfaloniere, the Pope, on horseback and wearing the papal tiara, went up to the cathedral and knelt at the very altar whence they had dragged Savonarola. He rested for some days at the Convent of Santa Maria Novella, paid the tribute of tears at the grave of his father the Magnificent, and witnessed the representation of a drama by Trissino at the house of Bernardo Rucellai. Then he continued his journey, and entered, not without misgiving, the stern city of Bologna, in the midst of a threatening throng, yelling in his ears "*Serra! Serra!*" in allusion to the arms of its former masters, the Bentivogli. The first interview between the two sovereigns had been arranged to take place, according to

most scrupulous etiquette, in the palace of the city. The Pope sat in his pontifical robes awaiting the King, when the impetuosity of the French noblesse was near spoiling the whole ceremony. The Pope and cardinals, greatly embarrassed, saw the king obliged to force his way through a crowd of jubilant young seigneurs. At last Francis I. was able to bend the knee and kiss first the foot and then the cheek of his Holiness, his gentlemen following his example. An old officer, prevented by the crowd from getting near the Pope, called to him from the rear—

"Grant me benediction Holy Father, for I have greatly sinned, inasmuch as I have made fierce war upon Julius II., your predecessor."

The King, put out of countenance by the freak, said to the Pope—

"To say truth Julius II. was a terrible warrior, less pontiff than captain."

And Leo X. gave his benediction with a smile to the shrewd old soldier of Marignan.

Lorenzo dei Medici used to say of his three sons, "Giulio is a good fellow, Piero a fool, and Giovanni a wise man." The wise man easily got the better of his conqueror. The Church of France paid with its autonomy

the price of this reconciliation. The chapters lost the right of election to the abbeys and episcopal sees, the nomination being granted to the Crown, the Pope receiving the *annats* in exchange. He restored Modena and Reggio, but despoiled the Duke of Urbino in favour of his nephew. He persuaded the King to relinquish the design of conquering Naples, and to return to France.

Francis I. was already beginning to sigh for his beautiful chateaux on the Loire, his hunting at Fontainebleau, and the witty conversation of his sister, *la Marguerite des Marguerites*; so he went back, nothing loath, taking Leonardo da Vinci over the Alps in his train, thus carrying to France the first breath of the Renaissance.

As to the Pope, cured of his mania for war, he decided not to play the part of absolute monarch anywhere save in his own papal states, and, by his family, in Tuscany. A plot formed against his life, by the cardinals Petrucci Riario and Sauli, gave him an opportunity of over-awing the sacred college. He held a consistory amid his armed guards and, after having thundered out his wrath before his prelates, condemned the three culprits to

death and ecclesiastical degradation. Cardinal Petrucci was strangled at night in his prison, his secretary and surgeon were quartered; Sauli and Riario were allowed to purchase their lives with gold, and then go into exile; after which Leo X. sold thirty-one hats at a single promotion, thus filling his coffers and making sure of his domination over the college, and of easy sway in all matters of the Church. Henceforth he could give himself up with an easy mind to the pleasures of taste, pursue the study of the noble Latin tongue, and in concert with Raphael cause the basilica of St. Peter to soar above pacified Rome, as a magnificent symbol of the papal power.

Three years after Marignan, in 1518, Raphael represented Leo X. in his portrait at the Pitti Palace as tradition, more indulgent than history, will always describe him, as posterity will accept and love him. He has not the dreamy dejected air of old Julius II. who, weighed down with care, is brooding over the destinies of the Church. He sits calmly at his table, clad in purple and ermine, and white silk marvellously embroidered; his beautiful, soft, white, feminine hands resting on Oriental tapestry. He holds a

magnifying glass, which has enabled him to appreciate the delicate illuminations of a missal diapered all over with beautiful combinations; near the book is a hand-bell of finely wrought gold set with gems. At the bottom of the open page appear in Gothic letters the first words of the Gospel of St. John, *In principio erat verbum.* He has raised his head and gazes straight before him, musing less on the words of the Evangelist than the graceful forms of blue and gold, which encircle the sacred text as with precious stones. The head bespeaks both amiability and sensuality, the countenance is open, the complexion brilliant, the features at once firm and gentle; the mouth, with lips at the same time full and compressed, betokens both the *gourmet* and *homme d'esprit;* the glance is both manly and ingratiating. The *tout-ensemble* expresses real majesty, and recalls the verse of Dante which the flattery of contemporaries had applied to him, *A guisa di leon, quando si posa.*

Such is the man whom the critics of the past, little practised in analysis, have identified with the finest period of the Renaissance. It would take some time perhaps to modify the too favourable verdict on Leo X.; which

certainly is not in accordance with facts. Michael Angelo, Machiavelli and Ariosto escaped from his influence, and lived away from his court. The years of his reign answered exactly to the least fruitful period of the first, who would seem to have been exhausted by the great effort of the Sistine chapel, after which he very rarely appeared in Rome. Machiavelli, in poverty and disgrace, wrote, it is true, his most considerable works under Leo X., who nevertheless had deprived the historian of his diplomatic appointments, and only thought of him in 1520, on account of some reforms he thought of introducing in Florence, and for which he needed a memorandum from the former Secretary of State. The first edition of Orlando Furioso appeared in 1516 at Ferrara, an abode which Ariosto declined to leave. He gives an account in his third satire of the journey he made to salute the Pope on his accession, when the Holy Father kissed the poet liberally on both cheeks—

> La mano e poi le gote ambe mi prese,
> E 'l santo bacio in amendue mi diede!

But the sacred kiss was all that he received, and Ariosto, after having danced attendance for some days among a crowd of

petitioners, returned home at his own expense, in bad humour enough, and quite decided never to revisit the Eternal City.

To say the truth it is chiefly Raphael who belongs to the reign of Leo X.; no longer Raphael, the pious artist and profound thinker, of the *Disputa* and the *School of Athens*, and who under Julius II., and by the side of Michael Angelo, still continued to represent the austere mysticism of the masters of the fifteenth century, but Raphael, painter of the radiant loveliness of the Madonnas and Sibyls; the more than half pagan Raphael of the frescoes of the Farnesina, and the mosaics in the Chigi chapel, the Villa Palatine, and the bath-room of Cardinal Bibbiena. Here we perceive, it seems to me, the really distinctive personal characteristic of Leo X. and his court—paganism. In this enthusiastic search for old manuscripts and monuments, and the learned correspondence kept up between Bembo and Erasmus, Jean Lascaris and Marco Musurus, in all these scholastic foundations—academies, libraries, printing-presses, Greek schools and professional chairs—which the Pope kept multiplying in Rome, and his

triumphant joy when those first five books of the annals of Tacitus were exhumed for him, we find a literary *furore* which goes very far beyond the deliberate preference of a Nicholas V. for profane studies, and which Italy had known already in the genuine admiration of Petrarch and the fervour of the neo-platonists. Not that paganism is the only leading trait in this complex physiognomy of Leo X.

We need not expect to find in him a sort of Emperor Julian! Scepticism had already invaded his character pretty thoroughly. If as sovereign pontiff, he troubled himself little enough about integrity of doctrine, as philosopher, he appeared equally indifferent to blows aimed at the platonic idealism by theorists like Pomponazzo. Heresiarchs and materialists, it is true, were the gainers, not being likely during his reign to be brought to the stake.

He was, more than anything else, an incomparable *dilettante*, eager for refined enjoyments; less solicitous by far about the progress of the human mind than his own intellectual pleasures. A splendid ceremony in the Sistina, a reception of cardinals or ambassadors in the *Camera della Segnatura*

carpeted with crimson silk, where he would reign like a demi-god under a baldaquin embroidered with gold—were delights that charmed him as much as a Greek tragedy. He relished the Latin poems of Sadoleto as a contemporary of Ausonius might have done, and when the concert of violins, lutes, harpsichords, and fifes took place at the banquets of the Vatican, Leo X. seated at a table glittering with vessels of finely wrought gold would accompany the melody in an undertone. Every *dilettante* is to a certain extent an epicure. The Epicureanism of Leo X., which must have appeared very discreet to those who had not forgotten the bacchanalia of Alexander VI., was of a very elaborate description.

Extraordinary dishes always pleased his fancy, sausages stuffed with peacocks' flesh amongst them, and the most racy comedies did not offend him. More than once the pontifical court was entertained with the plays of Plautus, the *Calandra* of Bibbiena, and the astonishing *Mandragora* of Machiavelli. The Romans might adopt the motto of their ancestors with a modification, and say *Habemus facetum pontificem*. To say truth, the cultivated Leo X. relished buffoonery

even of the grossest. It entertained him to be present at a repast of his fool Ebrondino, who would swallow sixty eggs at a sitting and make a single mouthful of a pigeon. One may read, in the works of Paul Jovius, of the practical jokes contrived by the Holy Father against two wretched poetasters in whose honour they gravely parodied the coronation of Petrarch at the Capitol. One of the victims, *il Querno*, perceiving that they made game of him, took himself off in dire dudgeon to his own village, fell ill on the road, and committed suicide with a pair of scissors. Cardinal Bibbiena was grand master of all this jollity at the Vatican. *Erat Enim*, writes Paul Jovius, *mirus artifex hominibus ætate vel professione gravibus ad insaniam impellendis.* The best tricks of the marvellous artists were reserved for the monks, for whom they would sometimes serve up apes or crows dressed like game as a great luxury. The Pope, eye-glass in hand, would gaze upon the poor wretches with the morbid curiosity of one of the eccentric princes of the *Histoire Auguste*. An eye-witness, who was secretary to the Duke of Ferrara, has left us the following description of some of the pastimes of Leo X:

"I was at the play on Sunday evening. Monsignor di Rangoni admitted me into an ante-chamber of Cibo's, where I found the Pope with his very reverend young cardinals. His Holiness walked up and down, allowing those he found eligible to be presented to him, and as soon as their number was made repaired to the theatre, our Holy Father being stationed at the door, noiselessly gave access to those he was pleased to admit, by bestowing the benediction. After the entrance of the laity, the Pope took his chair of state, raised five steps above the rest, followed by the ambassadors and reverendissimos. At the sound of trumpets the curtain rose, and displayed a canvas on which Brother Mariano was painted, with sundry devils crowding about him. The music struck up, and the Pope, with his opera-glass, mightily admired the scene, which was painted by Raphael. The nuncio appeared in costume and recited the argument. He made such game of the title of the piece, the *Suppositi*, that the Pope laughed heartily; but the French were somewhat scandalized at the subject of the *Suppositi*. Then they gave the play, which was very well acted, with music between all the acts

from an orchestra of fifes, bagpipes, two cornets, violins, lutes, and the little organ, with so many stops, given to the Pope by the illustrious Monsignore of happy memory. The last interlude was the Moresco, which illustrated the fable of the Gorgons. The spectators began to withdraw in such numbers and made such good speed that, the fates having made me stumble over a little bench, I ran great danger of breaking my legs. Bondelmonte received a violent push from a Spaniard, and while he tried to take revenge with his fist, I found means to escape. I certainly ran great risk of broken bones; however, I got compensation in the final benediction, and the look of favour with which His Holiness bestowed it.

"On this occasion there was also horse-racing with a troop of gennets under the management of Monsignor Cornaro, the cavaliers being attired, some as Moors others as Spaniards, in Alexandrian satin, with doublet, cowl and jerkin of changing silk. Serapica was in front with several valets de chambre. The Pope had given forty-five ducats to each of the riders. As soon as they reached the Piazza San Pietro they went at full speed towards the palace, where the

Pope looked on from the windows. The next day there was a bull-fight. I was with Signor Marc Antonio. Three men were killed and five horses were wounded; two of them have since died, among them one of Serapica's which threw him and put him in great danger; for the bull was upon him, and if the beast had not been stabbed it would never have let go, and would have killed him. They say the Pope called out, 'Poor Serapica!' and that he made great lamentation.

"In the evening they played a comedy composed by some monk, and as it did not please, instéad of having the Moresco danced, the Pope had the poor monk tossed in a blanket by way of interlude, in such a way as to give him a great blow on the stomach as he came down on the floor of the stage.

"However, the good monk managed to bite three or four of them pretty severely. At last they made him mount on horseback, and struck him so many blows on the spine that he has had to be put to bed and cupped, and is not well yet. Thy say the Pope has acted thus to give other monks a warning not to take it into their heads to

show off their monkeries. This diversion made him laugh immensely.

"To-day the races *à la hague* came off before the Vatican, the Pope looking on at it from the windows. Then came the buffalo race. It was amusing to see the clumsy brutes, sometimes running on and then backing. As they made one step forward to four steps backward, it was difficult to reach the goal. There were ten of them, and, by my faith, it was a pretty pastime. Then I paid a visit to Bembo, and afterwards to His Holiness, where I met the Bishop of Bayeux. There was nothing talked of but masques and revelries. Given at Rome on this 8th day of March, MDXVIII., at the fourth hour of the night.

"From your very illustrious Signoria's
"Humble servant,
"ALPHONZE PAULUZZO."

Evidently the gaiety of this court of Rome was somewhat excessive. It had lost sight of Gospel times, and ceased to know anything of the *Sermon on the Mount*. Leo X. was the ruin of the Church. This accomplished humanist, who would have been a remarkable pontiff in the eighteenth century,

in the days of Voltaire and the President de Brosses, had not soul enough to perceive the events that were near at hand. He was not able to understand that the Reformation was not simply a revolt but a revolution, still less to perceive the causes of that great crisis, or to discern in the bosom of the Renaissance itself, of which he considered himself sovereign moderator, the real commencement of the Reformation; which was in reality a reaction against the Renaissance, but at the same time by a dialectic movement of pitiless severity its real outcome.

There had been a period of extreme peril for the older Christianity, the venerable Church of Gregory VII. and Innocent VI., in this resurrection of Hellenism received with such generous enthusiasm by the Popes of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a peril which was clearly seen and very plainly denounced by Savonarola. The Middle Ages had made philosophy subservient to theology; the Renaissance emancipated philosophy, disinterred Plato, and re-established the work of Aristotle. While old painters, like Francesco Traini, Benozzo Gozzoli, and Taddeo Gaddi, represented St. Thomas as the angel of the schools ruling over Aristotle and trampling

Antichrist under foot in the person of Averroës,—Raphael in the *School of Athens* placed the Christian doctors opposite to the Grecian sages, philosophy face to face with theology. At the same time the source and fount of all profane poetry burst out afresh, in the revival of the works of Homer, of which Petrarch had not yet read one line in the original text while they were commenting at Florence on the poems of Dante, but which quickly banished from the Academies of Cosmo and Lorenzo de'Medici the lugubrious visions of the Tuscan poet. Little by little, rationalism, and sometimes scepticism also, invaded the minds while paganism penetrated the morals, the natural sensuality of the Italian temperament having moreover been already increased by the excess of luxury and indulgence. Upon this point Savonarola, a decided foe to the Renaissance, had already shown astonishing clear-sightedness. However, paganism, scepticism, and rationalism being none of them accounted formal heresies or causes of schism, Rome did not take the alarm, and Leo X., as he sat constructing Ciceronian periods, sincerely believed himself master of the current which was carrying him away,

unconsciously to himself. In November, 1517, one month after the publication of Luther's theses, he ordered the Dominicans of Germany to procure him, by the sale of indulgences, 147 golden ducats to pay for a manuscript of the thirty-third book of Livy. Livy indeed! It was very little a question of Livy at that moment! The literati of the Vatican were not aware that the humanists of Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, had found literary treasures far more important than the antiquities of Rome, or Greece either,—the ancient literature of the Hebrews; and that they were presenting the Jewish philosophy and theology to the religious consciousness of Europe, at the same time as the Bible—the *Kabbala* and the *Talmud* together with *the prophets*. In 1488, Pico della Mirandola, one of the teachers of Leo X., had published his thesis on the Kabbala, in which he said: "I find here at the same time St. Paul and Plato. . . ." In 1492, at the very time when the Rabbis of Toledo and Cordova, driven from Spain, were wandering miserably through Christendom, a Jew, physician to the Emperor Maximilian made the present of a precious manuscript of the Bible to Reuchlin, leader of the humanists

of Germany. In 1494 Reuchlin printed his book *De verbo mirifico*, the gist of which was: The Jews alone have known God. In 1498, three months after the execution of Savonarola, he visited Florence, gathered the mind of the martyr from the utterances of the visionaries who were lamenting him, returned to his studies, and published his *Rudimenta Hebraica* in 1506, and his *Lexicon Hebraicum* in 1512. From 1509 to 1512 Michael Angelo was adorning the Sistine chapel with his formidable paintings of the Hebrew prophets and the sublime subjects from Genesis. A correspondent of Leo X., the famous Erasmus, was editing the New Testament in Greek, while Luther was preparing to publish the Old Testament in German. Side by side with science, and the investigation of doctrines and annotation of texts—exercised in the fifteenth century on Homer and Plato, and venturing in the sixteenth to deal with Isaiah and St. John—criticism was growing into vigour and the press just coming to life. An adventurer from the banks of the Rhine, the Chevalier Hutten, published a pamphlet in 1514 against the monks, called *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*, a kind of Provincial Letters whose audacity was never surpassed; neither

by Luther's *Table-talk* nor the burlesques of Rabelais. The book appeared at Venice in 1515, brought out by the Aldine press, furnished with a *privilegio* of the Sovereign Pontiff, and protected against piracy for ten years. At the same time, Hutten, after a journey to Rome, edited the pamphlet of Lorenzo Valla on the Grant of Constantine, and audaciously dedicated it to Leo X. The whole of Germany, learned men and popular poets, artists and great printers, Melancthon and Hans Sachs, Albert Dürer, Cranach, Holbein and Froben, only waited for the signal of combat,—a doctor and a doctrine—to change the form of Christianity and destroy the work of St. Boniface.

The signal was soon given—the doctrine of salvation by faith made its appearance, and the *Biblical doctor*, as he was called in the convents and universities of Germany, published his thesis. Leo X. would not believe at first that the danger was serious.

"It is a drunken monk," he said, shrugging his shoulders; "let him grow grey, and he will speak very differently."

He imagined that the affair of indulgences, the nominal pretext of the Reformation, probably exaggerated by the Protestant

historians, was the only point of debate, and that it was merely a quarrel between the Augustinians and Dominicans. "Only monkish squabbles," he repeated, disdainfully. I do not know in all history of a more flippant speech, or such an instance of disastrous levity. Monkish squabbles, indeed! He forgot that monachism had been by its apostolate the strength of the Roman Church for the last thousand years; that the monks had, as it were, petrified Catholicity in their powerful hands; that they had subjugated Germany and England in the dark ages, and that the greatest popes and most learned doctors had been monks. He forgot, too, that monachism had often been a source of immense uneasiness within the Church; that the ardent mysticism of the monks, their disdain for temporal advantages, their revolutionary policy, and their immense influence over the lower classes, had more than once disturbed doctrines, upset the hierarchy, and frightened the papacy. If the Church had canonised Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas and Antonio of Florence, it had had also to struggle with Joachim of Flora and John of Parma; Jacopone of Todi, from his dungeon, had insulted Boniface VIII.; and Alexander

VI. had trembled before Friar Jerome. It only needed a rising of monks or the ravings of a mystic to make the whole fabric of Christianity appear to totter. A Pope of real genius, a Sixtus V. for instance, would perhaps have been able to prevent the religious divorce of the Germanic race from the peoples of the Latin communion—a separation which cost Europe two centuries of wars and revolutions, and iniquities.

In 1519 there was still time to have made it up with Luther. He wrote a letter to Leo X. in which he spoke with veneration of his mother, the Church of Rome, *Ecclesia romana, mater nostra.* He promised to lay down his arms if his adversaries the Dominicans would cease their furious harangues against him. He formally declared the authority of the Church to be superior to any authority *in heaven or earth.*

In 1520 appeared a fresh letter from Luther, but this time full of bitterness, written in a threatening tone that recalls strangely the last sermons of Savonarola against the corruptions of Babylon. He compares the Pope to Daniel in the midst of lions, to Ezekiel surrounded by scorpions.

Warming at his recollections of his stay in

Rome under Julius II. "Is there a place under heaven," he says, "more odious and corrupt than the Roman curia? It surpasses even the Turks in impiety."

Leo X. was charmed by the beauty of Luther's vigorous Latin, and said—

"This Brother Martin really has a fine wit!"

But whether the irritated cardinals urged him to precipitate the rupture, or whether the election of Charles V. to the Empire encouraged him to it, Leo X., in that very year, 1520, on the 17th of the *kalends* of July, fulminated the excommunication against Luther in the bull *Exsurge*—"Arise, O Lord, and judge Thy cause; incline Thine ear to our prayers, for the foxes have come in and would destroy the vineyard. Arise, O Peter, and defend thy holy Roman Church, mother of all the churches. Arise, O Paul, thou who hast enlightened Rome with thy learning, and consecrated it by thy martyrdom!" But the cry of the *servant of servants of the Lord* was stricken beforehand with impotence, for this dispute among monks had in a few weeks stirred up the universities, the secular princes, and the common people. Luther replied by his pamphlets, on *The Mass*, against

the *Papacy of Babylon*, and upon the *Bull of Antichrist.*

On the 10th of December, at one of the gates of Wittemberg, in the presence of students and townsmen, Brother Martin burned the Pope's bull and the decretals. The foundation of Protestantism was laid.

It was time for Leo X. to disappear from the scene. Schismatic Germany, united under one sceptre with Spain, the Netherlands and the kingdom of Naples, already appeared to long-sighted politicians a much more formidable enemy to Italy and the Papacy than the old Holy Empire of the Hohenstaufens had ever been. Machiavelli urged the pontiff to assert the independence of Christian nations. "This barbarous Empire," he writes, "is odious to all; now is the moment to take a decided step." Leo X. rashly committed a last error, which had the direst consequences for his successors. He threw himself blindly into the arms of Charles V., and, recurring to his implacable hatred against France, again brought the armies of Spain and the Empire upon the Milanese. He had just lost Raphael, the joy and pride of his pontificate. The crowds which pressed into Santa Maria Rotonda to witness the funeral obsequies of

the great painter, were greatly moved to see their noble Pope kneeling by the side of his dead friend, kissing his hand and bathing it with his tears. From that time he appears to have resigned himself to lose the worldly supremacy, which Julius II. had retained to his last moments. He spread his nets at Viterbo, fished with the line in the Lake of Bolsena, and hunted the stag on the rugged hills of Corneto. He retired for the autumn of 1521, not far from the melancholy banks of the Tiber, to his domain of Magliana, which Raphael had decorated, and lived there peaceably in the midst of a select court of humanists and musicians, exploring the country at his ease, always accompanied by an almoner, like a charitable country gentleman. The shepherds knelt devoutly as he passed, received his blessing and his little scudo, and said behind his back, "*E buona persona, ma ama a vivere*" (he's a good man, but enjoys the things of this life).

On the 24th of November, as he was in the very act of saying benedicite for his evening meal, a courier arrived with news of the defeat of the French by the Imperialists, of the evacuation of Milan by Lautrec, general of Francis I., and of his retreat to the Venetian territory.

"This is good news that you bring me," said the Pope.

The Swiss of the Papal Guard then fired a salute in token of rejoicing. Leo X. sent them word to be quiet, but they continued to fire, for they could hear from Rome the report of the cannon of the Castle of St. Angelo.

The Pope, happy and preoccupied, walked up and down his room to a late hour of the night, going from the window to the fire-place, where a good fire was burning. The next morning he found himself a good deal fatigued, but wished to return to Rome nevertheless.

The town was full of bustle, and the people were making holiday. He was about to call a conclave for the following Wednesday, when suddenly he felt himself seized with some mysterious illness. He went to bed, and said to his attendants—

"Pray for me, that I may be spared for the good of you all."

He had not even time to receive extreme unction, and breathed his last on the 1st December, towards mid-day. His master of the ceremonies, Paris di Grassis, saw him two hours later, already cold, and the body black and swollen. It reminded them of the dreadful death of Alexander VI.

"People are asking," said one of his intimates, "whether the pontiff has died of poison. The body has been opened; Messer Ferando thinks he has been poisoned, others think not; Messer Severino, who saw him opened, is of this opinion."

Leo had complained, before he died, of a burning fire within. Some days before, a stranger in disguise, who was never seen again, had engaged a monk of the Convent of St. Jerome to reveal to the Pope that a person of his household would introduce poison into a handkerchief, shirt, or napkin. The monk, not daring to go himself to the Magliana, informed the datary of the Vatican. Leo X., warned by this prelate, sent for the monk, and, after having heard him, said with much emotion—

"God's will be done; but I will take every precaution."

On the following morning the twenty-nine cardinals present in Rome repaired to the Vatican. The people filled the courts, staircases, and halls of the palace. Some regretted the deceased pontiff; others, irritated that he had died like a heathen, without the last sacraments, condemned him without justice or pity.

"You crept in like a fox," they said, savagely, "you reigned like a lion, and you have died like a dog."

In a letter, dated the 21st of December, a witness writes, "Certainly no Pope ever died in worse odour since the Church of God was founded" (*Concludo che non è morto mai papa con peggior fama dapoi è la chiesa di Dio*). But it will not do to accept the judgment of contemporaries on important characters in history; there is sure to be either too much apology or too much pamphlet. The part played by Leo X., apart from all exaggeration, was no inconsiderable one. If he was but a poor politician at the beginning of the storm that burst over the Church, at least his liberal culture has given him a distinguished place among princes. If he is found wanting in real greatness, and without the lofty intuitions needed for the guidance of Christendom, at all events he maintained intact that intellectual supremacy which the French Popes had acquired at Avignon, and which his successors have abdicated. Leo X. was neither a statesman nor a saint, but a literary sovereign, the last of the great Medici, who, like his father and grandfather, was devoted to the Renaissance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SACK OF ROME IN 1527.

THE Italian Renaissance, which had entered Florence, at its most brilliant period, under one of the Medici, was extinguished at Rome under another of the same family,—Pope Clement VII. Towards the year 1530, the flame of inventive genius began to burn lower in the Peninsula, taste to degenerate, and originality to decline, in literature as well as art. While painting continues to shine with unparalleled lustre among the Venetian colourists, we must wait forty years for a great poet, in the person of Tasso; who, moreover, has nothing in common with the writers and artists of Leo X.'s time, either in style or inspiration. However, the Renaissance had crossed the Alps, and was reviving in France and Spain, England and the Netherlands, whilst it was expiring in the Italy that had been its cradle. One of the principal causes of this phenomenon, it appears to me, was the discredit into which the papacy had fallen in Christian Europe, during the last pontifi-

cates of the fifteenth century,—a discredit which was averted for a time by two Popes of the first rank, Julius II. and Leo X., but aggravated by the Reformation in Germany, and redoubled under the inferior and sometimes scandalous Popes who preceded Sixtus V. and the reverend pontiffs of the last sittings of the Council of Trent. One extraordinary event,—the sack of Rome in 1527 by the Spanish and German troops of Charles V.,—suddenly despoiled the Holy See of its incomparable prestige; and the work of a horde of brigands availed at last to turn the stream of European civilization from the channel in which it had been flowing so magnificently since the days of Nicholas V. and Pius II.

The profound historian of the papacy, Leopold von Ranke, shows how difficult it had become, in 1525, for the Holy See to maintain in Italy that temporal power which Alexander VI. had augmented for the profit of his own family, which Julius II. had confirmed for the benefit of the Church, and which Leo X. had made the mainstay of the Medicean hegemony in the Peninsula. The political independence of the very peoples whose national liberties the Popes had always defended, as much from interest as old

association, was compromised by *the barbarians* as he called them, against whom Julius II. had worn out his life,—namely the French, from the days of Charles VIII. and Louis XII.; and the Spaniards, from the accession of the Borgias and the ill-fated alliances of Julius II. and Leo X.;—the former, by their repeated invasions and claims upon the Milanese, the latter, by their establishments in Naples and Lombardy. North and south, the road to Rome was open. The rivalry of Francis I. and Charles V., of which Italy was the chief theatre, placed the papacy between the horns of a dilemma. Two lines of policy, both full of peril, were open to it; either a Machiavellian neutrality, practised *à Italienne*, abounding in diplomatic reticences,—watchfully observant of the turns of fortune and keen to foresee the morrow's victory in order to profit by it—or a perfectly open offensive alliance with one of the rival parties. The timid Pope, Clement VII., would doubtless have preferred the former alternative, but he had not the resolution to carry it out thoroughly. This estimable pontiff,—learned, prudent, interested in theology, philosophy and mechanics, of a rare sagacity though in-

capable of lofty views, irresolute and awkward in delicate junctures, and always taken unawares in times of danger, who lost his head like a child, at the very time when coolness and decision were supreme necessities,—would have been perhaps upheld by his spiritual ascendency and the subtle negotiations of the Roman Curia, if the political crisis in Italy, and in Europe generally, had not been complicated by a religious revolution. In his day Protestantism openly became the national religion of the kingdoms of Germany. The diet of Spiers, in 1526, marks the political *début* of the Reformation, and the legal establishment of the revolted Church. The Catholic Emperor, who in Spain was relying upon the inquisition, was obliged in Germany to acknowledge the schism of the princes of the empire. His ambition moreover was able to profit by it. It was sweet to him to humble the Pope and the King of France at the same time, and thus realize that dream of universal monarchy which had disturbed the slumbers of the German Emperors ever since the days of Otho the Great and Barbarossa. To say the truth, the struggle between the priesthood and the empire was fiercer than it had ever

been under Gregory VII. and Innocent III.; for, this time, the empire was fighting for the symbol of a hostile communion; and the priesthood, weakened by the abuses against which Savonarola had so stoutly protested, was no longer sustained, as in its days of heroism, by the unanimous adhesion of all Christian consciences. Far-seeing minds were already discerning the approaching catastrophe. Negro, the Venetian, writes from Rome in 1523, "This sovereignty is resting on the point of a needle; God grant we be not soon driven to Avignon, or to the depths of the sea. I already foresee the downfall of the spiritual monarchy." Doleful miracles kept multiplying in Italy. In Lombardy the Madonnas were weeping, in Italy they appeared with bleeding wounds. Monks from the pulpits, and hermits in the market places, were predicting the ruin of the Peninsula and the end of the world; denouncing Clement as Antichrist, and recalling the prophecies and the tragic fate of Friar Jerome. At Cremona, a child of eleven, and at Rome a new Jonah clad in sackcloth, were calling pope, cardinals, and people to repentance. But, while the popular imagination was thus possessed by a presentiment of

irreparable misfortune, and old Frondsberg, chief of the Lutheran bands, was crossing the Alps with a gilded cord in his hand, saying openly, "I am journeying to Rome to hang the Pope," Clement VII. trusting with the utmost simplicity to the success of the holy league he had formed between France, Switzerland, the Italian States and the Holy See,—and in which he hoped also to enrol Henry VIII. of England,—could write by the hand of Ghiberto his confidential minister, "This war will decide the deliverance of Italy; our descendants will regret not having lived in our days to have shared our triumph."

One might have seen from the very beginning of hostilities, that the Pope's cause was lost. Francis I., who had only just escaped from his Spanish prison into the arms of his mistresses, was enjoying life in his chateaux on the Loire, and hunting with his ministers in Champagne, and while all the time secretly negotiating with Charles V. engaged to raise an army of 10,000 men in the Swiss cantons, to supply money, to send the gentlemen of his household to Italy, and his fleet to Civita-Vecchia. He himself was to repair to Spain with 25,000 foot-soldiers

and 2,000 lances, whilst Henry VIII. was to descend upon Flanders. "Don't let the Pope be alarmed," he said to the nuncio, "we will impose any terms we please upon the Emperor, and after concluding peace make him the most glorious Pope that was ever seen." But the subsidies never came, neither the Pyrenees nor the English Channel were ever crossed; and France only furnished 6,000 infantry and 500 lances; a few leaky vessels, under the Count de Vaudemont, held possession for a few days only of the shores of the Bay of Naples, and Clement VII. could only reinforce his feeble and faithless Italian infantry with 2,000 Swiss. Florence, with a bad grace, contributed a few florins from its exhausted treasury, and watched its opportunity to throw off the yoke of the Medici and drive away the pontifical legate. Venice furnished the general for this unfortunate enterprise: Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke d'Urbino, a traitor to the cause, both from personal cowardice and hatred of the Pope; who had no other tactics than to avoid giving battle, and to follow the enemy at a distance with short marches, ready should he face round to retreat at once and fly. "It is most prudent,"

he kept saying, "to fight with the sword in the scabbard." The only captain of the league was Giovanni de Medici, leader of the Black Bands—the friend of Aretino, famed for his fierceness and bravery, who took the field at the head of veterans who had continued to wear mourning ever since the death of Leo X. Machiavelli hailed this young man as the saviour of his country. In November, 1526, he met the Germans of Frondsberg near Mantua, and supposing them to be without artillery, fell upon them with his sword. He received a bullet in the thigh, and died a few days after, carrying with him to his grave the last hope of Italy.

To the destitution of the Pope, the Emperor was able to oppose the most abundant resources. He had plenty of statesmen and diplomatists, faithful allies, and a competent general. He commanded Italy, in the south by the vice-royalty of Naples, and in the north by the Spanish occupation of Milan. He had one foot in the pontifical kingdom through the Ghibeline faction of Colonna, whose leader Pompeio, a cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, in September of 1526, at the head of eight thousand peasants, sacked the Trastevere, the Bargo and the Vatican, and

starved the Pope for three days in the Castle of St. Angelo.

Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, meanwhile furnished Charles the Fifth with artillery, provisions, and a strategic post between Venice and Romagna. There were not wanting cunning traitors of his own party vile enough to incite the unfortunate pontiff to make a false step, and then to laugh at his consternation and bewilderment. Foremost of these was the Marquis of Pescara, who, having been entreated by the Pope's agent, Morona, to join the league in order to gain over the crown of Naples, concealed Antonio di Leyva behind the tapestry that he might overhear the pontifical proposal; then there was Ugo di Moncada, a disciple of Cæsar Borgia; eventually Morona himself, who sold himself to the imperial party; and Lannoy, Viceroy of Naples, who, at the most critical moment of the whole struggle, persuaded Clement VII. to dismiss his best troops and disburse his last *scudi*.

As to the Imperial army it was something amazing. The English troops which had ravaged France in the fifteenth century did not approach it in rapacity. Under Frondsberg, Antonio di Leyva, and Philip of Orange,

and under De Guaste and Moncada, the soldiers of Charles the Fifth showed pretty plainly what horrors might be expected, should cupidity and fanaticism urge them on to Rome. Whether Germans or Spaniards, Lutheran iconoclasts who burned the churches, or furious mystics who burned Jews and Moors—more finished barbarians than their ancestors the Huns and Vandals —they struck Italy with an unprecedented paralysis of terror. It was of little moment to these tatterdemalion conquerors that their leader was becoming master of the old world as well as the new. They had hungry stomachs and empty pockets, for the Emperor paid them badly, and they reckoned upon returning to the dreamy Germany of the *minnesingers* or the chivalrous Spain of the *Romanceros*, loaded with gold and satiated with pleasure.

So rampant was their covetousness that they set at nought the authority of their captains, brought their generals to trial and condemned them to death. Frondsberg had actually to come to blows with a mutinous revolt in his own camp; while he was haranguing his Germans, his face suddenly became purple, and he fell wounded upon a

drum. The German foot soldiers cursed their hard fate during their winter marches in the boggy plains of Lombardy; they envied the good fortune of the Spaniards, who held possession of Milan, the opulent city of the Visconti and the Sforzas, whose population was decimated by oppression, emigration, and pestilence, and its resources exhausted by exorbitant contributions, fire and pillage.

The soldiers tormented the unfortunate citizens on whom they were billeted, and ransacked their houses for arms and money. One day the citizens, who ventured out of the town, would be put to death, on the morrow ransom would be demanded. The provosts would be kept as hostages, till the treasures of their respective parishes should be handed over to the captors. Shops were shut, the people clad in mourning, and the streets deserted.

"Many," says Guicciardini, "dashing themselves down from the house-tops, leaped into the wells, or strangled themselves in their despair."

The Germans enjoyed no such excesses, but had to content themselves with a little town or village here and there to burn and

plunder. Thanks to all this insubordination and confusion, and the seductions of the Italian climate and people, fortune might yet have turned the scale in favour of Clement VII., either by a destructive duel between the two armies, or by Florence, occupied like Milan, being slowly drained of its resources. But unfortunately the Emperor had found the one man who could wield to his own purposes the appetites and passions of these ruffian warriors ; namely, Charles Comte de Montpensier, Constable of France and Duke of Burgundy.

This personage, Italian by his mother, a Gonzaga, allied with the throne by his marriage with the grand-daughter of Louis XI. and sovereign of seven provinces between the Loire, the Rhone, and the Cevennes—aspired also to inherit the crown of Valois. Debarred from the succession, by the Salic law, and further set aside by the birth of the dauphin in 1518, foreseeing moreover that his fiefs would have to be absorbed in a united France, he sold his sword to Charles V., demanding the hand of his sister in marriage, and coolly prepared by a simultaneous invasion of the English and Imperialist forces, to compass the partition of

France. In 1524 he besieged Marseilles, and was for nearly four years the best leader of the Spanish and German troops against the armies of Francis I.

This traitor—a man of insatiable ambition, witty and lavish, without conscience or fear, despised by his soldiers for his baseness, whilst dreaded for his inflexible severity, and a great general in virtue of his penetration and promptitude,—was perhaps the most brilliant example of that dangerous combination of energy and perfidy which Machiavelli named *virtù*, and which he had been glorifying for the edification of future ages in the person of Cæsar Borgia.

One evening this *virtuoso*, just flushed with a new victory, encountered the Chevalier Bayard on the battle field, breathing his last beneath the shade of a tree.

"It is a grievous pity to see so brave a man," he said, "in this condition."

"Monseigneur," replied the dying hero, "there is no pity in it for me, for I die in the path of duty. But for you I feel much pity, to see you acting against your prince, your country, and your oath."

The Duke de Bourbon left Milan on the 2nd January, 1527, at the head of the

Spanish forces. On the 9th February he crossed the Trebbia, and joined the 13,000 foot soldiers of General Frondsberg. The imperial army, 30,000 strong, was disposed in the following manner:—The advance guard was headed by the Prince of Orange with the light horse and gens d'armes; the Marquis du Guast commanded the Spanish infantry; Frondsberg, the Germans, and Ferdinand of Gonzaga a corps of Italians.

The Constable, watched from a distance by the cautious Duke d'Urbino, halted first at San Giovanni, between Ferrara and Bologna, in order to reinforce his troops with money and provisions. It was now the end of March, when many circumstances combined to aggravate the difficulties of Clement VII. He had hastily engaged, in January, to restore Parma, Placentia, and Civita-Vecchia to the Emperor, and in concert with the Florentines to pay 200,000 ducats for the evacuation of the Peninsula by the Imperial troops. Both the Sacred College and the Venetians rejected this treaty with contempt, and sent it to Francis I. At the same time the forces of the Holy See, under Cardinal Trivulzis, defeated the Spaniards at Frosinone, and drove them in disorder into the

kingdom of Naples, a success which so reassured the Pope that he suddenly broke his treaty, and made fresh advances to the Court of France. But the Viceroy of Naples had already taken the offensive, and was invading the States of the Church; whereupon Clement VII. waxed timorous again, and renewed his negotiations with the Imperialists. On the 15th March he signed a second treaty, less onerous than the preceding, in which he promised only 60,000 ducats, and was to keep possession of Civita-Vecchia. The opposing army was to retire without delay, if Venice and France would also accept the convention.

The league was thus virtually dissolved by the Pope who had himself formed it; but the Imperialists would not hear of retreat. Ill clad, ill fed, without shoes, and without pay, and discouraged by the drenching rains of winter, the soldiers of De Bourbon, whom he had led on to expect the pillage of Rome and Florence, irritated by inaction, had just sacked the Constable's quarters and killed one of his gentlemen. "When I arrived with the conditions of peace," writes Feramosca, the Emperor's plenipotentiary, "they were like raging lions." The 60,000

ducats offered by the Pope appeared a mockery to them. A mutiny broke out in the camp, and Feramosca only escaped with his life, by flying on the horse of Ferdinand di Gonzaga. Bourbon took counsel with his captains. "We are determined," they said, "to advance." "And I will go with you," he replied. On the 30th of March they decamped. With their baggage-waggons and heavy artillery these terrible bands traversed Romagna, their feet in the mire, and ravenous with hunger. Relentlessly burning the villages and castles on their march, they slowly gained the ridge of the Apennines, and defiling along the snowy heights, descended opposite to Arezzo, and then by the valley of the Arno marched upon Florence. On Easter-day, the 21st of April, near Montevarchi, Bourbon was met by Lannoy and the steward of Clement VII., who brought him two-thirds of a new contribution wrung from the Pope by the viceroy; 100,000 ducats, which the Florentines had raised in all haste by selling the vessels from their churches. The Constable required 240,000. But no sum of money, however exorbitant, would now have been able to stay the march of the Imperialists. Lannoy, threatened as

Feramosca had been, retreated quickly to Sienna. On the 26th of April Bourbon encamped at San Giovanni, twenty miles from Florence. On the same day, the Duke of Urbino and the Marquis de Saluces, yielding to the entreaties of Francis Guicciardini, the ambassador of Venice, and Guillaume de Bellay the envoy of Francis I., entered the town at the very moment when nobles and people on the Piazza della Signoria were rising against the Medici, to the old revolutionary cry of the Tuscan communes; *Popolo! Popolo! libertà! libertà!* The army of the league suppressed the revolt without difficulty,—and, order once re-established, Florence was able to conduct her own defence. Suddenly Bourbon changed his tactics. He saw at once that he was lost if he kept the Imperialists waiting for even a few days, in their present state of insubordination. It was clear that he must give up all thought of Florence, if he would seize Rome; and that Rome would be the prize of a bold *coup de main*. The dusky crowd therefore moved on towards Sienna, received a supply of provisions from the senate of the town, and, leaving artillery and baggage behind to ensure a more rapid march, hurried

on impetuously towards the capital of the Holy See.

On the 1st of May, Bourbon reached the pontifical boundary. The infantry, outstripping the cavalry, marched twenty miles a day. The Paglia, swollen as it was by the late rains, was nevertheless quickly crossed, the current being interrupted by the horse, while the foot-soldiers, lower down the stream, with arms interlaced, and with the water up to their mouths, so that the undersized among them were carried away and drowned, crossed from one bank to the other, in files of from thirty to fifty men. They burnt Montefiascone and Ronciglione on their march. On Sunday evening, the 5th of May, the Pope saw with dismay, from the windows of the Vatican, these formidable visitors swarming under the cypresses of Monte Mario, leaning on their rusty arquebuses and gazing calmly on the Eternal City, outstretched at their feet.

The distress of Clement VII. was extreme. "I was with His Holiness early this morning," writes the English ambassador—"the terror the Pope was in is something indescribable." It was not till the 2nd of May that he was aware of the ap-

proaching invasion. The only forces that remained to him were a few *débris* of the Black Bands, 500 horse, and a handful of Swiss—in all, less than 3,000 men. He did not even know in what country the army of the Duke d'Urbino was encamped. His coffers moreover were empty. The ambassador of Henry VIII. sent him a thousand crowns, they pawned plate and jewels, and on the 3rd of May sold five cardinal's hats. On the 4th and 5th, the pontifical general, Renzo da Ceri, armed three or four thousand men, principally soldiers who had been disbanded in April, artisans, and valets and grooms of the cardinals. Benvenuto Cellini managed to enrol fifty volunteers in the studios and taverns. The night was spent in arming the ramparts on the right bank of the Tiber, and repairing the breaches in the old walls. The Imperialists were already establishing themselves in the meadows which separate Monte Mario from the Vatican, and on the slopes of the Janiculum.

Bourbon decided in a council of war that the attack should begin on the morrow at break of day. He had hardly provisions for eight-and-forty hours longer, and retreat,

through the country they had just been ravaging, was an impossibility. At the same moment, the Pope was assembling his captains, and informing them that God in His inscrutable wisdom was letting loose the heretics upon Rome, to destroy them by fire and famine; then he gave plenary indulgence to those who should die in the good cause, and promised benefices to the survivors. But he tried in vain to inspire others with a courage he did not possess himself. They recalled in his presence all the evil omens that had been troubling the timid. A mule had brought forth young in the palace of the Cancelleria, a wall of the Vatican had fallen down; a thunderbolt had struck the Bambino in the arms of a Madonna at Santa Maria Traspontina; on Good Friday, in the papal chapel, the Eucharist had been snatched from its tabernacle by some invisible hand, and thrown to the ground. A peasant, just come from the neighbourhood of Sienna, had proclaimed at the cross-ways the coming chastisement of the Church, and although he was speedily silenced in a prison, the remembrance of his threats still intimidated the last defenders of Clement VII.

At break of day on Monday the 6th of May,

1527, the Constable rode on horseback, his cuirass covered with a white mantle, towards the Borgo, whose walls at the height of San Spirito were easy to scale. The guns of the Castle of St. Angelo opened fire, which was sustained by the pontifical arquebusiers on the ramparts. At sunrise, a thick fog rose also from the neighbouring marshes and enabled the foot-soldiers to advance, without running much risk, up to the very walls. Bourbon dismounted, and taking a ladder with his own hands, placed it close to the Porta Torrione.* A ball struck him in the belly, and he fell into the arms of his Spaniards, who carried him dying into a neighbouring chapel. "Monsieur de Bourbon," says a contemporary, "has ended his life, but did not die without having done his duty as a good Christian; for he confessed, and received his Creator, and asked to be carried to Milan—but it is thought he meant to say *Rome*, as he had been saying constantly, '*To Rome, to Rome.*'" Cellini gives us to understand that the fatal blow came from his hand; others attributed it to a priest,—among them Brantôme, who has commemorated the incident in his ballads of the French adventurers of the sixteenth century.

* Now Porta Cavallegieri.

This arch-rebel, whose dying agony was perhaps aggravated by the remembrance of the last sigh of Bayard, just heard the shouts of his triumphant soldiers before he died. The Spaniards, making their way into a house built into the ramparts opening both into the city and outside the walls, which the papal general had forgotten to defend, were already filling the Borgo, massacring the pontificals, and running towards St. Peter's, shouting death-cries as they went. "*Espana, Espana, amazza, amazza.*" Renzo with his improvised company, followed by a despairing crowd, fled by the Ponte Sisto to the Capitoline. The Pope who was at prayers in his chapel, warned by the tumult, rushed to the covered bridge of Alexander VI., which leads from the Vatican to the Castle of St. Angelo; behind him came Paul Jovius, lifting His Holiness's train, that he might run the quicker, and, when the sovereign pontiff reached the uncovered bridge at the entrance of the fortress, throwing his purple cloak over his shoulders, lest the white cassock of Clement VII. should attract the attention of some Lutheran arquebusier.

More than 3,000 persons—prelates, soldiers, cardinals, noble ladies, and foreign merchants—were already forcing their way

into the courts and corridors of the castle. They let down the portcullis, and the crowd, repulsed from the asylum in which all Rome would gladly have taken refuge, and already charged by the Imperialists who were streaming out of the Borgo, rushed mad with terror, on to the bridge of St. Angelo, the entrance to which was defended by Du Bellay, with a party of French. Cardinal Pucci, his face covered with blood, was carried by his servants and squeezed into the fortress through a window, whose bars were torn out for him from within, and Cardinal Ermellino, the Archbishop of Capua and ambassador to France, got in after him in a basket drawn up by a cord.

Others hid themselves in the churches, in the palaces of Ghibeline cardinals, or the houses of German, Spanish, or Flemish residents.

Four thousand Romans fell, massacred by halberds, along the banks of the Tiber under the eyes of the Pope, on the steps of St. Peter's and the slopes of the Janiculum ; outside the precincts of the Trastevere, and in the gardens and vineyards of St. Onofrio. Towards evening the Prince of Orange entered the deserted streets of the

Trastevere by the gates of Settimiana and San Pancrazio ; the massive gates of the bridge of Sixtus IV. were wide open. Beating their drums and blowing their trumpets, the conquerors crossed the Tiber, whose reddened waters were choked with corpses, and cautiously proceeded as far as Campo di Fiori and the Piazza Navona.

There they halted for the night, and lighted their fires. A great silence reigned over Rome, and, as in the days of Alaric, the ruddy lights of the bivouac fires empurpled the distant ruins of the Palatine and the desolate solitudes of St. John Lateran.

The next day the sack of Rome began. No refuge was spared ; not the most noble basilicas, nor the homes of foreigners, nor the palaces of cardinals, even of the imperial party ; nor the mansions of even German, English, or Spanish prelates. They advanced upon the richest houses ; to the sound of martial music they forced an entrance and put the inhabitants to the sword ; they insulted women in the presence of their husbands and fathers, outraged the nuns in their cloisters, and even on the steps of the altar. Mothers stabbed their daughters to the heart, or tore out their own eyes that they

might not be witnesses of their shame. The Spaniards, maddened by the sight of blood, killed without pity, till they rested from very weariness ; the Germans, masters at last of this great Babylon, against which the fathers of the new faith had excited their fanaticism, gave themselves up to sacrilege.

They violated the churches, tore down the crucifixes, befouled the pictures, broke open the shrines, trampled the relics under foot in the mud, and threw the heads of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. Andrew into the river. They met a priest carrying the viaticum, and, leading him into a stable, ordered him to administer the communion to an ass ; he refused and was murdered. They came out of the convents and churches, wearing shining mitres and cardinal's hats, and with chasubles over their cuirasses ; half drunk and sometimes mounted on the Pope's own mules, they would form mock processions, and parade the streets with all sorts of buffoonery.

They shut up the Cardinal of Ara-Cœli in a coffin, and carrying him to the church chanted over him the grotesquest of funeral dirges ; then they took him back to his house and before his eyes drank to intoxication

of his most exquisite wines from the golden chalices. For several days the unfortunate cardinal might be seen riding behind a German, from house to house, begging his own ransom. At last, after having littered their horses with the bulls and archives of the Holy See, they opened the tomb of Julius II. and tore the pastoral ring from the heroic Pope, who had aroused Italy with the cry, "Let us drive out the barbarians." Then they held a conclave in the chapel of the Vatican, clad as cardinals, whose ceremonies they parodied, as they deposed Clement VII. and proclaimed Martin Luther Sovereign Pontiff, and Bishop of the universal Church!

When the first fury of the Imperialists was assuaged, they sought to enrich themselves. No one escaped pillage and ransom —all coffers were forced open and all cellars ransacked. Ransoms paid to the Spaniards would have to be paid again to the Germans, and then to the Italians. The Cardinal of Sienna, after having been ransomed from the Spaniards, was taken again by the Germans, and dragged ignominiously through the Borgo.

In order to extort from the Romans the

secret of their hidden treasures, the soldiers would break their legs, hang them out of windows, or hold them over the cisterns, break off their teeth, and sometimes cut off noses and ears which they compelled the wretched victims to eat. Historians record that the Germans were more impious, but less cruel than the Spaniards. When they had possessed themselves of everything, they willingly protected those whom they had beggared.

Neither the artists of the Renaissance nor their works escaped the attacks of the victors. Valeriano Pierio has filled a volume with the wrongs endured by writers and artists. Marco Dente, the engraver of Ravenna, was killed ; the learned translator of Hippocrates, Fabio Calvi, died of want ; the philosopher Telesio fled naked into the country ; Sansovino, the two Caravaggios, and all the pupils of Raphael, went into exile. Cristoforo, Bishop of Corfù, not being able to pay a contribution of 6,000 ducats, was fastened to a tree, pierced by nails, and left to die of hunger.

We shall never know the number of works of art, pictures and statues, precious books and manuscripts, which perished during this

fatal week. A French captain, Anne de Montmorency, saved the tapestries that had been executed from Raphael's cartoons, and restored them afterwards to Jules III. The basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul were turned into stables; the *Stanze* of the Vatican into kitchens for the barracks, and the *Disputa del San Sacramento* was insulted by the halberdiers of Frondsberg.

The massacre and pillage went on for eight days. Famine and pestilence carried on for long weeks the work of destruction. Domestic animals were eaten in Rome, and even rats; the Pope and his companions in captivity were soon reduced to eat mule's flesh and the herbage they could gather in the trenches of St. Angelo. The Frenchman, Grolier, who was able to leave the city, writes that all the houses had their doors and windows broken, and that the shops were empty; the corpses were lying out in the streets, which echoed at rare intervals to the soldier's tread. It appeared as if Rome were dead and buried for ever.

As to the Pope, closely immured in his old castle of St. Angelo, his fall was all the harder from being so humiliating. He had been vanquished, so to say, without a com-

bat. The advanced guard of the league, under the orders of Guido Rangona, having arrived on the 7th of May in the evening in sight of Rome, at Ponte Salara, fell back hastily on Otricoli. On that day it might still have entered the fortress without hindrance, by the Porta del Popolo, and have carried off Clement VII.

The left bank of the Tiber and the bridge of St. Angelo remained open for nearly a week, without the Pope having had enough courage to take flight. The Marquis de Saluces and the Duc d'Urbino, having left Florence on the 3rd of May, had reached Nepi on the 26th, a place ten leagues north of Rome, and by the end of the month had rallied round them the light horse and arquebusiers of Rangona. The Duke d'Urbino appeared about to march upon the city, to besiege the mole of Hadrian and deliver the Holy Father; but suddenly stopped and turned back towards Perugia, declaring that he would not act without a reinforcement of 16,000 Swiss, 10,000 Italian foot soldiers, and 40 guns.

The situation of Clement VII. was desperate. From the flat roof of his prison he could sadly watch the burning of his vineyards

on the slopes of Monte Mario, or admire the prowess of his grand master of artillery, Benvenuto Cellini, the only happy man in the fortress of St. Angelo. One morning he pointed out to the Holy Father a red-coated Spaniard wandering at his ease in the meadows beyond the trenches; he pointed his gun and shot the loiterer through the body, then knelt down at the feet of his Holiness and demanded benediction!

At last Cardinal Colonna had pity on his master, and on Rome; he liberally threw open his palace, and ransomed and supported several cardinals. Under his auspices negotiations were entered into with the imperialists. They first insisted on having as hostages two archbishops, two bishops, and two noblemen of Rome, whom they dragged in chains like criminals to the foot of the gallows at Campo di Fiori, where the executioner awaited them. Their friends gained over the gaolers, who allowed themselves to be intoxicated; then the hostages took to flight, and reached the camp of the Duc d'Urbino in Umbria. Clement VII. was then required to deliver up five of the richest cardinals. Pompeio Colonna stood surety for two of them, whom he carried off into

villegiatura with him at Subiaco ; the three others were closely guarded in the Castel Nuovo at Naples.

The Pope next sold by auction, to prelates of the imperial faction, several red hats, whose price stilled for a time the rapacity of the besiegers. He bound himself to pay 400,000 ducats,—100,000 immediately, 50,000 within twenty days, and the rest at the expiration of two months. He gave in pledge, meantime, the towns of Ostia, Civita-Vecchia, Civita-Castellana, Piacenza, Param, and Modena. Six Spanish and German companies took possession of the fortress, whence the Pope was not to depart till he had paid the second instalment of the contribution. Guillaume du Bellay and the other French officers took their leave on Whit-Sunday, but the captivity of the pontiff was prolonged six months, for want of money. At last the Emperor consented to the liberation of Clement VII.

On the eve of the day appointed for his release, the 9th of December, at midnight, the Pope, disguised as a scullion, with a sack at his back and a basket of provisions on his arm, his hair and beard covered with a cowl, and a big hat pushed down over his eyes,

left the castle by the wicket gate, re-entered the Vatican, and got beyond the city walls by means of a secret door in the wall of the pontifical gardens.

A servant of Louis Gonzaga awaited him on the road, with a Spanish jennet. The Pope threw himself into the saddle and galloped to Capranica, where he took a little rest and refreshment, and then went on to Orvieto, to complete his reconciliation with the Emperor.

Two years later, in the cathedral of Bologna filled with the trophies of Julius II., Clement VII. placed the two crowns of Italy and Germany on the head of Charles V. —the iron crown of Lombardy and the golden one of Italy. The vanquished priesthood consecrated the triumphant empire. More than seven centuries had passed away, since Leo III. by crowning Charlemagne on the tomb of the apostles, inaugurated that temporal and political power of the Holy See of which the sack of Rome announced the decline, or rather—if we take into account the ever-changing lights and shadows of history —provoked the transformation.

Europe was profoundly moved by the disasters inflicted on the metropolis of Chris-

tianity. Men felt that such devastation far surpassed those other great tragedies of history,—the destruction of Jerusalem, and the fall of Constantinople. Politicians and men of letters shared in the popular instinct that the end of the world was at hand—that this event began a new evolution in the life of the peoples of the West. A Venetian diplomatist, Jerome Balbo, had said to Clement VII., "Fabius Maximus saved the Roman Republic by his temporising; your temporising on the contrary will ruin not only Rome but Europe." The historians and chroniclers of the sack of Rome—Luigi Guicciardini, Buonaparte, and Vettori—saw clearly enough that the blow struck at the Pope had cruelly wounded the Church; the two first can only find words to express their dejection by borrowing the cries of lamentation of the Hebrew prophets. A whole literature grew out of the dolorous theme—popular ballads, *Novelle* by Giraldi Cintio, in the style of the Decameron, biographies by Paul Jovius, historical narratives by Santoro da Caserta, Patrizio Rossi, and César Grollier; anonymous *Dialogues*, discourses in Latin by Paolo Manutio, the journal of Marcello Alberini and Gavardo da Brescia,

and the witty rhymes of Pasquin. A strange work by a Ghibeline writer recalls the political aspirations formerly expressed by Dante. "Although Cæsar may have robbed me of my liberty we have always the same hopes. I will not regret it if he reigns; moreover I verily believe he has been raised again, or that he will rise, for an angel has often warned me that a Cæsar would come to deliver me."

The soldiers of the Marquis de Saluces sang as they recrossed the mountains—

Parlons de la deffaicte
De ces pauvres Rommains,
Aussi de la complaincte
De notre père saint.

O noble roy de France
Regarde en pitié
L'Eglise en ballance
Las elle en a mestier (besoin).
Metz la hors de souffrance;
Pour Dieu! ne tarde plus,
C'est ta mère, ta substance;
O fils, n'en faictz reffus.*

In all these expressions of the popular sentiment, one just idea predominates—that the Holy See has lost rank in the political hierarchy of the Europe of the sixteenth century. This idea reappears with force in the verdict

* The last monument of this literature is the singular drama of Byron: "The Deformed, Transformed," of which Julius Cæsar is the hero, and the sack of Rome the subject.

of Leopold von Ranke: "The splendour of Rome had absorbed the beginning of the sixteenth century, which is a marked period in the intellectual development of humanity; but this event put an end to it. *Mit diesem Tage ging sie zu Ende.*"

For the general history of European civilization, as well as for the history of literature and the arts in Italy, the close of this period is of the gravest significance. The third age of the papacy closed with it. In the early days of the Roman Church the Holy See had enjoyed an apostolic primacy in Europe, of which Gregory the Great was the most noble representative, and which ceased when all the civilised nations of the old world had entered the Christian family. Then appeared the political primacy, which was inaugurated by Gregory VII., and one of whose chief manifestations was the Crusade. It had its *raison d'être* in the social organization of the Middle Ages, in the holy Roman empire and the feudal system; it lasted all through the vicissitudes of the great struggle between the Church and the Empire, up to the reign of Boniface VIII. In the fourteenth century, the papacy, in its retirement at Avignon under the protectorate of the

kings of France, undertook a new function, which the humanist Petrarch and the recent historians of Italy have too much despised, but which the impartial knowledge of Victor Le Clerc has done justice to. These popes, natives of Limages or Gascony, favoured the advance of human knowledge by the foundation of universities; by their liberal dealings with the great schools of Paris, Bologna, Toulouse, Oxford, and Orleans; by the progress of geography and foreign languages, due to their Oriental and Asiatic missions, and by the encouragement they gave to men of letters, lawyers, and artists. John XXII., who tried to establish Latin schools in Armenia and to encourage physicians there, Clement VI., who in his own person protected the Jews from the Inquisition, consecrated the university of Prague, and protected that of Florence, who adorned his palace at Avignon with the paintings of Simon Memmi, and gave such brilliant *fêtes;* and Urban V., who endowed the schools of Hungary and Poland, were pontiffs who established a tradition which was carried on by the best popes of the fifteenth century—sometimes even by the worst—and which, shared in for a short time by the earlier

Medici, became the glory of Julius II. and Leo X. This intellectual culture, quickened by the study of the antique, this progress in civilization and the arts, in which since the fourteenth century the Holy See had taken such a prominent part, was nothing else than the Renaissance.

As a necessary consequence of the sack of Rome, the direction of the Renaissance fell out of the hands of the sovereign pontiffs. The Renaissance itself withdrew from Italy and spread over all the countries of Europe excepting Germany. The papacy, fortified by the Council of Trent, confined itself henceforth to the supreme government of the Latin Church. In the sixteenth century, in spite of reformed Germany and schismatic England; in the seventeenth, in the presence of Gallican or Jansenist France; in the eighteenth, in the philosophic Europe of Voltaire and Swift, of Lessing and the Encyclopedists, it continued, for souls that remained constant to the traditional faith, the source of all authority, and the regulator of all doctrine.

It is then the Roman and Italian Renaissance which the deed of Charles V. stabbed to the heart. Michael Angelo,

alone, of all his contemporaries, foresaw this result of the sack of Rome. Hence the fierce bitterness of his *Last Judgment* and the infinite sadness of the *Tombs of the Medici.* He survived the liberties and the civilization of his country, and passed a solitary old age amid the schools which hastened the decadence of art. In 1546, he went with Vasari to visit Titian at the Vatican. The Venetian master presented one of his *Danaë* to the painter of the Sistine chapel. He praised the brilliant qualities of the picture, but went home deploring that a feeling for beauty and chastity of form was not now, as in his young days, the first law of painting. "No one knows how to draw now," he said to Vasari. He wandered, like an exile, from Rome to Florence, and then back again to Rome, and watched the fire slowly burning out at these two great centres of the Renaissance. For himself, he was longing to depart, and the thought of death recurs incessantly in his last poems, as well as in the familiar anecdotes which Vasari has collected of his last years. One evening, as he was showing his friend the *Pietà* which he had sculptured for Julius III., he lifted his lantern to show the marble

better, and let it fall. "I am so old," he said, "that death often pulls me by the coat in this way, to make me go with him. I shall drop down suddenly like this lantern, and so the light of my life will pass away also." Cardinal Farnese saw him one day in winter, wandering in the snow, round the Coliseum, and asked him where he was going in such bad weather. "To school," said Michael Angelo, "to try and learn something." The reply of an architect, if you will, but also the utterance of a poet and a thinker. In the solemnity of the desolate Forum, the last citizen of Italy was learning the hard lesson of nature and history; that decay is the unavoidable condition of earthly things—of cities, institutions, and nations; and that it is the truest wisdom to accept the inevitable law of our humanity.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIACOMO LEOPARDI.

THE day of protest came at last. When the poets once more utter a cry, even one of despair, they proclaim that the moment of awaking is at hand for the nation that has so long suffered in silence. The strains of Leopardi thrilled the heart of Italy. It was indeed like a funeral dirge, interrupted here and there by notes of malediction, but it aroused Italy from the heavy slumber to which Michael Angelo had consigned her, with his

Però non mi destar, deh! parla basso.

Count Giacomo Leopardi was born in 1798, in the Pontifical States, not far from Ancona and Loretto, at Recanati, a poor deserted little town, peopled for the most part with Gothic churches and dilapidated palaces—shelved, as it were, on a ledge of rising ground, surrounded by a vast and melancholy horizon. To the west it has abrupt mountain heights, standing detached from the ridge of the Apennines; to the

east, a fertile and monotonous flat, which extends to the shores of the Adriatic. His father, Count Monaldo Leopardi, was a stately gentleman of old family and rigid bearing, very devoted to the Church. He was also a man of letters, and had inscribed proudly over the door of his library the munificent motto : *Filiis, amicis, civibus, Monaldo de Leopardis.* But no one ever came to disturb the books, amid which the child Giacomo was silently passing the only peaceful years of his life.

By the time he was fifteen years old he had taught himself, without the aid of any masters, French, Spanish, English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. His brother Carlo, who shared his room, often saw him after midnight, still kneeling to write at his little desk by the last expiring glimmer of the lamp, far into the dawn. He read Plotinus, commented on Epictetus, and meditated over Dante and Shakespeare. At the age of seventeen, he had six or seven volumes in manuscript on learned subjects. At nineteen he was translating and annotating the fragments of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, recently discovered by Angelo Mai, and was preparing to publish Lucian's Treatise on History.

He never spoke of the old Greeks or Romans but with the religious enthusiasm of Boccaccio or Machiavelli.

"We are returning to the days of Petrarchs and Poggios," he writes to Mai, "to the time when each day was made glorious by a classic discovery and the joy of men of letters was incessant;" and he entreats his correspondent to send him, day by day, to Recanati the fragments of Cicero's *Republic* as they were deciphered. At that time he believed fully in his own future, and confessed his boyish ambition with a touching naïveté. It was to the glory of Italy that he would consecrate his learning and talents!

"Italy is my country," he says, "and I burn with love for her, thanking Heaven for having made me Italian, because our literature, little cultivated as it is at present, is the only legitimate daughter of the ancient classics. He who would benefit Italy must first help her to philosophic utterance, without which she will never have a modern literature—and without an original literature she can never be again a nation." He writes in July, 1817, to the academicians of Viterbo, "Our sovereign, glorious, and common country is Italy."

According to him, literature of every kind had either to be created or revived. Italy had produced no lyric poetry since the amorous and patriotic *canzoni* of Petrarch; political eloquence was dumb, philosophy still in its infancy; tragedy, satire and criticism either unknown or misrepresented; and Leopardi, one of the most extraordinary young men who had appeared since Pascal, in the intoxicating hopefulness of his twentieth year, was himself preparing to give the signal for the literary Renaissance he longed to see.

Giordani encouraged his friend in this beautiful dream. "It is an immense consolation for me," he writes, "that you should have acknowledged Italy as your country. Oh, if this holy sentiment of patriotism were but shared by many of your peers!" (and here he borrows the words of Dante), "Italy would be the queen of the nations and not their concubine. She would no longer be a hostelry of griefs!"

But their noble illusions were as short-lived as the happiness of Giacomo. In the year 1817, after six years of excessive toil, his health declined. First he had to limit himself to six hours of study in the day, and

in order to exercise a frame irreparably injured by his unnatural and sedentary life, he undertook to walk as he read. In 1819 matters were made worse by a malady of the eyes, which laid him aside for several months; and a devouring melancholy took possession of him, which was incessantly aggravated by the inaction to which he was condemned.

"Ah, my dear Giordani," he writes, "what do you think I am doing now? I rise late, and then take walking-exercise in my room till breakfast, without ever opening my mouth or looking into a book. After breakfast I resume my walk till dinner; only occasionally, with great difficulty and many interruptions, getting one hour's reading. This has been the manner of my life for the last six months."

The anxious Giordani replies with infinite tenderness—

"My dear beloved little Count, whom I adore as an angel, take good care of yourself; rest, shut your books, ride on horseback, play at football, above all, try to be happy."

"I must always be wretched," replies the already despairing Leopardi, "ever lamenting my cruel fate, and the broken promise of my ardent boyhood."

The melancholy town of Recanati, where he consumed his days, had become insupportable to him. He dwelt on its boorish manners and indifference to intellectual topics. There was no one to whom he could even lend books, or who would dream of borrowing them—no journals, no conversation, no ideas.

"There is a dearth of everything but fatuity and foolery; and visitors are amazed at the silence and slumber in which we are sunk."

He felt stifled in the miserable little town, and exclaims—

"The world is so beautiful and so full of marvels—and must I, who am only eighteen, resign myself to say, I shall live in this wretched hole till I die where I was born?"

He called Recanati "a den of thieves, which the graces never deigned to visit, even as an hotel," and was in despair at the thought of dragging out his useless days, sick and unknown, in such a desert. The family mansion itself, where his studious boyhood had been spent, seemed to him now no better than a prison. From the first his father never appears to have understood the marvel of his stupendous intelligence, but treated him as a mere *fanciullo* (child), and

with singular harshness and parsimony; never giving him a single *baiocco* for the purchase of books, and above all, refusing him the means of leaving Recanati.

"He gives me full permission to get away from here," writes Giacomo, "if I can do it without costing him anything, but he will not move a finger to help me on my way."

The ardent student, at the age of twenty-two, was obliged to endure the grievance of having his papers secretly examined by his father! When he published his *Canzoni*, he had to do it in spite of opposition from Count Monaldo, who was doubtless alarmed by the sensation they might produce in pontifical circles.

"If we were to carry out the cautious system of my father," he writes, "we should never mention any period but that of Aaron, and our works would have to be regulated by the censorship of the old Spanish inquisition! My soul is sick of these domestic fetters! April, 1820."*

* Count Monaldo Leopardi's subserviency to the priests—a prejudice surviving from a period when they alone had the keys of learning—is curious enough in Italy, where the greatest names the country can boast are arrayed in bitter hostility against the sovereign pontiff. In the fourteenth century we see in this attitude Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio; in the fifteenth Ariosto, Machiavelli, Sarpi, and Aretino; in the seventeenth Fortiguerra; in the eighteenth and nineteenth Giannone, Genovesi, Casti, Alfieri, Monti, and Pindemonte.—M. J.

But the joys of friendship, to which the young aspirant gave himself with all the enthusiasm of youth, still consoled and supported him. Giordani's letters having failed him for the space of two months, he appeals thus urgently to his friend Angelo Mai for speedy tidings of his friend.

"I suffer more anxiety than I can express; for knowing as I do the infinite love and solicitude he has for me, I can only imagine the very saddest cause for his silence; and were my forebodings confirmed, I leave you to imagine what would become of me."

The more desponding he became, the more touching was his appeal to the constancy of Giordani.

"Will you, too, forsake me," he says. "You, of whom will be my last thoughts in the very act of dying, if indeed the memory of the heart remains with us in our last moments. Oh, my very dear Pietro, never dream of ceasing to love me, and thus take away my great solace in the early death to which I look for release from my misery." Giordani watched with consternation the progress of this morbid weariness of life in his friend Giacomo, as each letter betrayed aggravated symptoms of his mental malady.

Sometimes he describes himself as one on the high road to insanity, sitting motionless with staring eyes, his hands upon his knees, incapable alike of smiles or tears, not able to wish for anything, even for death. "For I do not see," he says, "any difference between death and my poor life, which even suffering can no longer stir." Sometimes he bids adieu to every joy and hope, mourns his departed youth, and declares that for him, as for all who think, happiness ends with childhood, that *those only can be happy in life who know how to remain children to the last day of their lives.*"*

"I am now twenty-one," he writes, in December, 1819, "and having begun to think and to suffer when I was a little child, have already passed through sorrows enough for a long lifetime. Mentally, I am now old, and even decrepit. I have survived all sentiments and enthusiasm, and it is full time for me to die."

One night, just a month before this

* There seems to have been no one to treat this sickness of the soul with the wholesome tonic of the grand old gospel it was unconsciously feeling for, and to show this "infant crying for the light" that it is not by *remaining* but by *becoming as* little children, *i.e.*, recognising our sonship, that we enter into the kingdom.—M. J.

last letter was written, he threw open his bedroom window, and gazed calmly on the pure skies and quiet fields. "A gentle breeze," he says, "caressed my cheek, dogs barked in the distance, and old impressions awoke within me. I thought I heard my own heart beating, and I cried aloud, as one demented, calling for aid from nature, whose voice I heard again after so long a silence."

This deplorable crisis, had it been prolonged, would inevitably have brought him to imbecility or suicide. For some months past, the last thoughts and violent death of the second Brutus had been the subject of his solitary meditations. . . . At last his father consented in alarm to send him to Rome at the close of the autumn of 1822. This journey saved him. In two months' time, his bodily health returned. Like a plant that has been languishing in the dark, he revived at once under the cheering influence of the January sun. For the first few weeks of his stay, his isolation amid the solemn memories of Rome appeared to foster his morbid melancholy, and indeed he never seems to have felt the full charm usually exercised on dreaming suffering souls by the noble city, where, according to Chateaubriand,

those should live and grow old who have no ties to life.* He never really loved either the great ruins standing in their solemn solitudes, or the grand desolation of the *Campagna*, so dear to painters; but complained of the interminable avenues which wearied his still sickly frame, and of "the stones and mud, and the eternal streets of the Eternal City." The first lively emotion he experienced was at the grave of Tasso, where he shed tears. But by degrees his mind grew calm, and he returned to his favourite studies. He was anxious to undertake the translation of the works of Plato for a Roman publisher, and began to catalogue the Greek manuscripts in the Barberini Library, in spite of the ignorant jealousy of the librarian, confidently hoping to make some important literary discovery by this means, as Mai had done. At the same time he makes very penetrating observations on the state of society in Rome, noting its vain and puerile tastes. He vainly seeks for politicians or men of letters, philosophers or

* Unfortunately this charm of the Eternal City is daily disappearing; much to the regret of her old lovers, especially of those votaries who sought to commune with "the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire sitting enthroned upon its grave." —M. J.

poets, finding only in their stead a few antiquaries, vain of their easy discoveries, protected and patronised by princes and prelates. For his own part, he only ventured to introduce himself as an archæologist, not as a writer. Cardinal Mai excepted, he only saw about him grown-up children, incapable of manly aims or serious thought, wearily occupied with the tedious futilities of Roman life. "This morning," he says, "I have been listening to a grave and lengthy discussion on the fine voice of a prelate who chanted mass the day before yesterday, and his dignified presence in the ceremony. He was asked how he had acquired such an admirable delivery, whether he had experienced no embarrassment at the beginning of the service, and other questions of the same sort. Our prelate replied that he had formed himself by assiduous attendance at the pontifical chapels, a practice that had been very useful to him, &c. I learned afterwards that sundry cardinals and other eminent personages had congratulated him on having made such a success of this mass. All the conversation in Roman society is of this stamp." All the true *savants* in Rome at that time were

foreigners, and the philological acquirements of Leopardi secured him a friendly reception among them. None of them appreciated the young writer more highly than Niebuhr, then Prussian ambassador at the Holy See. "He told me not to distress myself if Italy did not applaud my efforts, since Italians are 'off the road' in matters of science, and assured me that the approbation of foreigners would not be wanting. He has himself undertaken to get all I have discovered or may yet discover in Rome, printed in Germany; and now asks if I would be willing to accept some public appointment." Accordingly, the Cardinal Secretary of State, at Niebuhr's request, offered Leopardi a post at the pontifical court, but on the express condition of assuming the ecclesiastical garb of the prelacy.* He refused the offer at once. Again in 1825, he declined the chair of Greek and Latin elocution at *The Sapienza* which was offered him by Niebuhr's successor, the Chevalier Bunsen, of which however the honorarium only amounted to 200 *scudi* a year;

* The Roman *prelate* is not necessarily an ecclesiastic, but may arrive at any position of power or profit, if he will abjure all liberal ideas, when he puts on the violet stockings. Henceforth he is less a *subject* of the Pope, as About remarks, than his *ghostly confederate*.—M. J.

and in 1826 declined to assume the functions of Vice-Rector of the University of Rome, which would oblige him to act as occasional substitute for three of the professors and wear clerical garments; and he was afterwards unable, on the ground of health, to accept a professorship of Greek philosophy which Niebuhr promised to get for him in Prussia.

In the spring of 1823, Giacomo returned to his solitude at Recanati, when *ennui* immediately resumed possession of him, and he wrote in French to his friend Jacopsen, at Bruges, a letter which is but a prelude to the despairing stoicism of that addressed, nine years later, to Monsieur de Sinner. "The art of not suffering is the only one I am now trying to learn, since I have given up all hope of truly living, books and solitary walks occupying all my time. My life is more flat and tame than the words of an opera." The religious and philosophic scepticism to which he afterwards clung so despairingly, and from which he suffered to the last day of his life, probably dates from this period. His letters keep reproducing with added emphasis the thought so frequent with him before his journey to Rome, that

all man's knowledge and happiness is but illusion and nothingness.* Moreover, the monotonous domestic tyranny of his home became more and more oppressive to him. "The day on which I leave this place," he says, "I shall have no means of providing a dinner, since my father, either from want of power or inclination, refuses me the means of living for a few days, till I can support myself by my own exertions. . . . If I cannot make up my mind to the prospect of starvation, I must not leave this house. May, 1825." His father yielding for the second time, he set out, and stopped at Bologna, where he was so charmed by the life of the place, its noble aspect, and above all, the hospitable reception it gave him, that he took heart again to live and work. He quickly returned to it, after a short absence at Milan, where the publisher Stella had summoned him to receive a commission to edit the works of Cicero and Plato; but with the first chills of autumn his health suffered. He was attacked

* He failed to see that the illusions of life are *not* nothingness, but *real factors* in the eternal fruition to which they lead us on. Neither Giacomo nor his father appear to have conceived the possibility of intercourse with Heaven but through the priesthood, though far enough removed from the ignorant populace who can "practise their religion," as the phrase goes, without believing in God, or obeying His laws.—M. J.

with an internal inflammation which precluded the use of a fire or of out-door exercise during the whole of a severe winter. "From morning till night," he says, "I get no rest, and keep shivering with cold till I sometimes feel inclined to cry like a child." He got better in the spring; so much so, indeed, that he fell in love, in a purely platonic fashion, with a great literary lady, more charming and witty than young, the Countess Malvezzi, who translated *The Dream of Scipio* with him, and with whom he talked philosophy and poetry nearly every evening, —from Ave Maria till past midnight. At that time he wrote to Count Papadopoli, a young Venetian to whom he was warmly attached; "I am leading here a life which is as free as air—all I now ask of fortune. My health is very passable." In November, 1826, he once more turned his steps towards his native town.

At the beginning of 1827 we find him again at Bologna, received with open arms by the friends he had left there. In the month of June of that same year, he repaired to Florence, where he found his good friend Giordani. The kindly society of Florence received him as a man who had already made

his mark in literature; but poor Giacomo, afflicted now with an incurable malady of the eyes, was compelled to shut himself in, all day, with closed blinds, only daring to go out at nightfall "like the bats." He writes to his brother Carlo; "I can neither read, write, nor think." As winter came on, he journeyed by the little Tuscan diligences, which cost less than posting, towards Pisa, whose climate is so good for invalids. There is not, perhaps, in the whole of Italy, a more melancholy and forsaken-looking place than the old Ghibeline city, with its long, deserted quays and silent streets, and the great, empty, grass-grown spaces of its Campo Santo; but the autumn sun was still lingering there with kindly warmth, and Pisa offered him such a calm retreat, that it appeared to him more magnificent in its quiet seclusion than either Rome or Milan, more cheerful even than Florence. He speaks of it in his letters, as a perfect paradise. He was as peaceful and solitary there as the sparrow he had formerly immortalized in song: *Sicuti passer solitarius in tecto.* This winter was a period of peace and touching tenderness, in the decline of Leopardi's life. On his good days, when the wind was not

too strong, or the light too brilliant for his nearly blinded sight, he walked slowly up and down a street he had surnamed *Il Cammino di ricordimenti* thinking of his friends at home. "What is my Carlo doing, and why does he never, never write to me? and *il piccolo* Luigi and my Pietro? I am always dreaming of you, either awake or in my sleep." His father's letters became less and less frequent, till he began to think himself forgotten at home, and bemoaned himself over and over again, with the same refrain, like a suffering child.* "Rest assured," he writes at last to Giordani, "that you are the only man in the world whose friendship is like a city of refuge to me, and the tower of strength on which my weary frame finds rest." In the month of May, 1823, his brother Luigi died; and Giacomo, detained at Pisa by his daily increasing infirmities, kept sending home the tenderest letters of sympathy. At last he came back to Florence, with a nervous affection that hindered him from moving without the acutest pain. "I have a great inclination to put an end to my

* That one so sweet, modest and impressionable, should have failed to find support in a hard materialism is no marvel, it is the most inscrutable feature of his mental malady that he ever sought it there.—M. J.

complaints once for all," he says, "and to make myself a more complete fixture still; for I really get out of patience sometimes; but don't be afraid, I shall put up with my wretched life to the last." His malady constrained him to such constant solitude, that he saw no one excepting, at rare intervals, the literary circle at Viesseux' library and Florence, so scorching during the summer, seemed an odious city. The first cool days of autumn, however, calmed his spirit. He resumed his daily airings, and towards the end of the year, accompanied by Gioberti, was able to travel by way of Perugia to Recanati, which he entered for the last time. He would now gladly have applied for a public post, but says, "I cannot get one in my own country (the Roman States) where everything is given to priests and monks; and away from here what post would be given to a foreigner?"

During the summer of 1829 he lost the powers of sleep and digestion; and it took him two days to write a letter of twenty lines.

"My life is a purgatory," he says, "in this wretched place, where my only joy is in remembering the friendships of former days."

He passed a wretched winter.

"After sixteen months of an existence, such as I would not impose on my worst enemy," he writes to the historian Colletta, "your letter has been a blessed beam of light in the darkness."*

In the May of 1830 he took leave of his family, whom he was destined never to see again, and dragged himself as far as Florence. Some months previously, a report of his death had circulated in Italy, and excited universal lamentation in the great towns of the Peninsula. He was profoundly touched by the deep sympathy of his countrymen, and determined to make to them his last farewell in that heart-rending dedication of his poems, where, recalling the premature and incurable infirmities against which he had been hopelessly struggling from his twentieth year, he regretfully takes leave of study, friendship, and society, and bequeaths to all who have loved him the lyrics he has not been able himself to read over or correct for the press.

* If these morbid utterances seem utterly unworthy of a great mind, the reader must remember that in this martyrdom of mind, body, and estate, poor Leopardi was shut out from the martyr's resource of *glorying in tribulation*. The pain was his, be the lesson ours.—M. J.

"I must abstain from writing more, since each line costs me a bloody sweat," he says in a letter which only shows us the increasing heart sickness and immeasurable *ennui* that had taken possession of him. He was in want of money, a prey to constant internal suffering, and could not walk more than half an hour at a time with tottering steps, on the rough pavement of Rome. There were no more learned conversations with Niebuhr to furnish a distraction for him. He fell ill of a fever, took to his bed, and had to keep his room for a month in a third story of the Via Carrozza, a damp, dingy street between the Corso and Piazza di Spagna.

His infrequent airings were now confined to the Piazza del Popolo; he never revisited either Coliseum, Forum, or Museum, and returned at last to Florence by the then dangerous route of Viterbo and Sienna, well content to have escaped from Rome, where, he says—

"One has always cause to tremble for friends who go out after sundown, since there is rarely an evening without an assassination on the Corso, at one or two of the night,"—by which he means eight o'clock in the evening, according to our reckoning.

At this time his father was for withdrawing his little allowance, but yielded at last to his humble entreaty for twelve *scudi* a month, which would suffice for his absolute necessities in Florence, then by far the cheapest town in Italy.

"I would greatly prefer death," he says, "but for that I must await the will of God."

Relieved from immediate necessity, he lingered on for a whole year longer at Florence, only writing a few lines, at long intervals, and now and then buying a few books, whose dumb presence cheered him, though sight failed him for their perusal; conversing in the evening with a few faithful friends, and sometimes visited by literary foreigners, such as Stendhal, then Consul at Civita-Vecchia, and the Abbé de Lammenais. He first saw the latter on his return from Rome, and pronounces him an excellent talker—*abilissimo parlatore.*

In the month of September, 1833, the Florentine physicians sent Giacomo to Naples, but neither its climate nor society answered his expectations, while his increasing blindness obliged him to borrow the hands of others for the letters he now dictated at rare intervals.

In 1834 he repaired to a villa commanding, over the bay, a fine view of Mount Vesuvius, and the Naples physicians promised him great improvement in health from the beautiful season. His sight certainly improved rapidly; he gained some strength, and begged his parents not to be too much shocked at the sight of him, as he wished to return home to die among his own people.

He wearied of Naples, which he pronounced "semi-savage, and semi-African," as quickly as he had done of Florence, Rome, and Bologna.

"I must get away," he says, "from all these *lazzaroni* and *polichinellos*, noble and plebeian—a set of thieves just worthy of the Spanish rule." His slender means did not permit him to hire an apartment by the year, according to Neapolitan usage, at the enormous prices to which the English had accustomed the natives, and it was with extreme difficulty that he at last succeeded in finding a house where he could lodge by the month, and await the issue of a literary undertaking proposed to him by Antonio Ranieri. He postponed his departure indefinitely, laboriously writing a few pages for the proposed publication, short of money,

robbed by the bankruptcy of his banker, compelled to begin a lawsuit, and wearied out by the slow and ruinous process of the Neapolitan law.

In the year 1836 the terrible visitation of cholera came unawares, and made him prisoner in a desolate hamlet. Sanitary regulations cut off communication with the Roman States, and any one who attempted to travel by way of Naples was inevitably attacked by the epidemic, as soon as he entered the town.

"After having spent several wretched months in the greatest anxiety," he says, "running risks of infection every day of my life; after having endured an intensity of cold, such as my poor frame never encountered an approach to before, unless at Bologna, and which, having had ten years' wear and tear since then, it had no power to resist; and just at the beginning of December, when the cholera began to abate, my right knee took a frightful colour, and became twice the size of the other. I could not consult a physician, since his visits in this secluded spot would not have cost less than fifteen ducats."

A chest attack, for which he himself prescribed without the aid of a doctor, kept him still longer in his solitude. He was hardly convalescent when he reached Naples in March, 1837, and, having spent all his remaining resources in securing a lodging, was attacked on one of the first nights he spent in it by the people of the house, who thought him dying, and determined to take possession of his chattels.

In the month of May he had a violent attack of asthma, which hindered him from walking, lying down, or sleeping; his sight got worse, and his right eye was threatened with cataract.

At the same time the cholera, which had retreated before the intense cold of winter, reappeared, and increased every day with the advance of summer. It was feared that the second visitation would have been, as at Marseilles, worse than the first. Communication with the north, which had been resumed for a few days, was again interrupted. Travellers to Rome were obliged to undergo a quarantine of twenty days' duration in the miserable little town of Rieti, on the road to the Abruzzi, which was infested by brigands. Under these circumstances Giacomo wrote a

last letter to his parents, in which he did not conceal his assured presentiment of his approaching death, announcing his return, however, should his strength last out for the journey.

"I am making all speed," he says, "since I am convinced that the term allotted by God to my earthly life is not far distant. My daily and incurable sufferings have increased with age to a point they cannot surpass, but, overcoming the feeble resistance offered by my dying frame, I trust they will soon lead me to the eternal rest, which I daily ask for, not from heroism, but because of the burdens I endure in the flesh. I tenderly thank my father and mother for their present of ten scudi, and kiss both their hands. I embrace my brothers, entreating all to ask of God for me that, after having seen you once more, a happy death may speedily put an end to trials for which there is no other remedy."

Eighteen days after this last farewell was penned, on the 14th June, death, which had lingered so long, came at last to the relief of Giacomo Leopardi. Antonio Ranieri and his sister were with him, and a carriage was at the door to take him again into the country.

His lungs appeared paralysed, and he gasped for breath, but without agony. It was at the witching hour, when the sun sets over Posilippo, empurpling Vesuvius, and the sea-breeze comes floating over the vines of Capri, and the orange groves of Sorrento, to refresh the streets of Naples.

"I can see a little better now," said Leopardi, turning to his gentle watcher. "Open that shutter, and let me see the light."*

And in the full glowing warmth of the fervid sunset, which streamed over his bed, the poet fell asleep.

They buried him in all haste, so as to spare his remains the horrors of the *fosse commune*, in the poor little church of San Vitale, on the dusty highway to Pozzuoli. Ranieri placed a modest tablet in the porch, commemorating the learning, genius, and suffering of his friend in a very simple inscription; and the traveller who lingers to read it would fain trust that the hapless spirit, whose earthly part rests below, is now enjoying, under fairer conditions, the harmony and love which he yearned for so vainly here below.

* The last words of Goethe—capable of a philosophic application.

There was doubtless a necessity for all this long martyrdom, to mould the philosophy and inspire the poetry of Leopardi. If the originality of a writer consists in the complete correspondence between his works and his inner life, no poet of the present century has been more entirely original. Never, certainly, was the human reed more bruised and battered and broken by the winds. For five-and-twenty years he suffered without intermission. The outward circumstances and political conditions of his country, and his own poverty and broken health, not only prevented the free play of all joyous emotions, but troubled the serenity and crushed the hopefulness of his spirit. A prey to *ennui* and condemned to inactivity, he gave himself up unresistingly to the current of sadness which carried him away, and tossed him hither and thither like a helpless toy. Sometimes, however, it lifted him to an almost majestic height. He was himself aware of this inward elevation, when he penned reflections in his *Pensieri*, which often recall in their philosophic strain some of the finest fragments of Pascal. "Melancholy is, in a certain sense, the sublimest of human emotions. Not to be able to find full satis-

faction in any earthly thing, even were the whole world our own possession—to conceive of the universe as infinite, and yet to feel that the aspirations of our own souls are greater still, and cannot be bounded by such a universe—to be always discovering the insufficiency and nothingness of earthly things —to suffer from their vanity and emptiness—to experience melancholy, in short, is to my mind a most affecting token of the greatness and nobility of our nature."

This settled sadness was as real as the misfortunes of his life had been. Leopardi was not one of those *dilettanti* who seek by the artistic arrangement of their poetic wailings to impress the too credulous reader with a sense of the depth of their despair. "Young people," he used to say, "often seek to make themselves interesting by playing at melancholy. An assumed melancholy may perhaps interest people for a few moments—women especially; but when it is a reality, it is shunned by the whole human race. In fact, nothing is really so acceptable in social intercourse as joyousness; for notwithstanding all that our young people may think, the world—small blame to it—had much rather laugh than weep." Neither is there

the smallest trace of literary imitation in the poet of Recanati. He does not derive his inspiration from any of the illustrious writers of his time, or seek to reproduce in himself the personality of Jacopo Ortis, or Childe Harold, Manfred, or Werther. He only twice mentions Lord Byron in the whole of his correspondence, and that quite casually, with none of the ardent enthusiasm of the neophyte. He did not relish Goethe, whom he taxed with "*une obscurité sauvage*" and whom he regarded as a mystic and visionary.

A prey to unconquerable depression, Leopardi at length embraced the philosophy of despair—fearlessly accepting all the bitter consequences of his choice, in constant alternations of isolation and opposition, the long-continued disapprobation of his father, and the distrust and hostility of the Government. None of his published works, it is true, show the extent to which he had departed from the orthodox Christianity of his Church; and, moreover, during his stay at Pisa, when the death of a brother had just plunged his family into mourning, he wrote to his father, whose distress of mind made him uneasy, that he had just taken the Holy Sacrament *à son intention*.

In 1832 a collection of *Dialogues*, strongly imbued with Christianity, having been at first attributed to him by his friends in Tuscany, there was for a time much talk of his conversion, or, as some called it, apostasy —but Leopardi made a declaration in the journals of Rome and Florence to save his honour, which forbade him to pass for a convert, not being one, and thus expose himself to the contempt of honest men.

His poetry is not less mournful than his philosophy. It recalls at times the most tragic passages of Lucretius, where the Roman poet pictures the infinite miseries of humanity, and utters terrible imprecations against the cruelty of nature—kind only to the lower animals, but casting the human child naked and unarmed, like a shipwrecked seaman on the inhospitable shores of life.* Giacomo's verse, too,—simple, measured and concise, like that of Dante, has borrowed something of the majesty of the Latin.

But there was one problem whose mystery was for ever tormenting the heart of

* It was partly his enthusiasm for the ancients that led him to commit the fatal anachronism of attempting to live the life and think the thoughts of some grand old heathen philosopher, under a dispensation where one must be Christian to be great at all.—M. J.

Leopardi, and for whose solution he invokes in one of his finest poems the heroic soul of Dante. "Oh, glorious spirit, answer me! Is the love of thy Italy now dead within thee? Is the flame that once burnt so hotly within thy veins now extinguished for ever? Say, will the myrtle never flourish again, which our misfortunes have so long broken down? Will our crowns be for ever trodden in the dust? Will there never arise one resembling thee? Are we dead for all eternity?"

It was just when Italy, after 1815, had escaped from French domination only to fall again under the Austrian yoke, that Giacomo indignantly accused France, "*la Francia scellerata e nera*"—before the shade he had conjured forth of the Ghibeline poet. In subsequent editions he substituted some vague words about "the last and cruellest of our wrongs"—and this wording is retained in the Florentine edition of 1865. But who would dream of blaming the Italian writer for his patriotic warmth, when in this very piece *On the monument of Dante*, he calls to mind the martyrdom of all those young sons of Italy, who set out 27,000 strong, under Prince Eugene Beauharnais, for the Russian

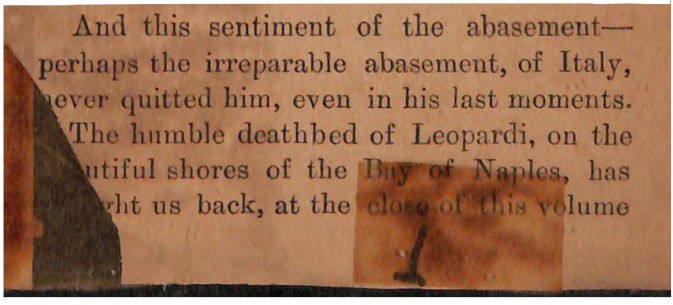
campaign, and perished in the snow—only 333 returning to the Peninsula? Is he not recalling also the triumphant restoration of the old régime, with its persecution of all the ideas of political liberty and civil equality, which the France of 1789 had been for fifteen years planting in the soil of Italy? He saw the Inquisition re-established in Rome, the public schools closed at Florence, the guns pointed on the Great Piazza of Milan, the liberals of Piedmont put to death, and 6,000 citizens immured in the dungeons of Naples. He writes to Giordani, in 1819, "They will never make me believe that the book I have twice despatched to you in vain has been both times lost by pure mischance, when I know that in Rome one had to move heaven and earth to obtain its *imprimatur!*" And in 1820, to Brighenti, he says, "The nobility is now the dead carcase of Italian society; but where is the living body?"

It was with himself and his group of friends, with the writers and poets who had been hunted from their country—thrown into the *bagnios* of Naples, buried alive in the underground dungeons of Spielberg—but who remained faithful to the last to the

them, and like his contemporaries, Pellico, Oroboni, Borsieri, and Carlo Poerio—Leopardi could have endured anything, rather than to keep silence and sleep on quietly through the degradation of his country. The calamities of Italy drew from him tears of love and pity. He shows us this Niobe of the nations of Europe, seated amid the ruins of her columns and triumphal arches, pale and bleeding, her arms loaded with fetters, and her dishevelled hair floating over her disrobed form—the image of desolation and despair. "Ah, she hides her face," he says, "she hides her face and weeps. Weep on, O Italy, weep on!"

But what if she were suddenly to rise up and walk! What if the genius of the dead should suffice to quicken the living! Some of those who were about him ventured to hope it, and this hope sustained their courage. But Leopardi, who had for so long despaired of his own destiny, despaired also of the future of his country. When he compared his fellow-countrymen with the Italians of the Renaissance and of the Middle Ages—still more when he contrasted them with the old Romans—he found them petty,

hear the voice of the heroic ages resounding from the pages of Cicero, as from a half-open tomb; and the silence of modern thought appears to him only more portentous. "Oh glorious forefathers," he exclaims, "have you still any hope of us? Is our light put out for ever? For myself, hope seems no longer anything but a dream and a delusion. . . . . Generous spirits of the past, an unclean multitude dwells under your roofs! Your immeasurable greatness causes us no longer either the blush of shame or the glow of emulation, and we are become an example of debasement for future ages!" Then he invokes the testimony of the heroic ages and noble souls of Italy—Petrarch, Tasso, Alfieri, and the Florentine Renaissance in all the fair promise of its spring—and finally concluding that no regrets, no efforts, will ever bring back this noble past, he concludes his *Canzone* by saying to Angelo, "Go, call up the dead, since the living are sunk in slumber."


And this sentiment of the abasement—perhaps the irreparable abasement, of Italy, never quitted him, even in his last moments. The humble deathbed of Leopardi, on the beautiful shores of the Bay of Naples, has brought us back, at the close of this volume

to the marvellous region where, in its first chapter, we visited the Italians of Pompeii. Here the radiant Italian sky has shone with equal lustre on the egoistic enjoyments of the Epicureans of the declining empire, and the last sigh of the most sorely tried of poets. The immovable serenity of nature harmonises with the thought that humanity is undergoing continual development for some glorious eternal future. Still, in the individuality of every nation, there are certain leading features which constantly reappear, differently modified and accented. Deep down at the root of Leopardi's stoicism we find a recurrence of the sceptical spirit which so early penetrated the moral and political life of the Italians, both under the Cæsars and in the days of the Renaissance; but this spirit has undoubtedly entered into combination with the ardent enthusiasms of an impassioned race, whose greatest men have carried their religious beliefs to mysticism, and their patriotic beliefs to the point of sacrifice.

THE END.

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